MINE IS THINE

BY

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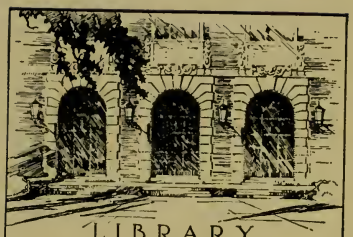

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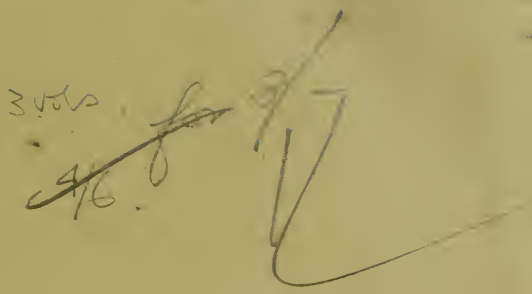

MINE IS THINE

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MINE IS THINE

A NOVEL

BY

LAURENCE W. M. LOCKHART

AUTHOR OF 'FAIR TO SEE,' ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES

VOL. I.

WILLIAM BLACKWOOD AND SONS
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TO

HIS OLD BROTHER OFFICERS

OF THE

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THESE VOLUMES ARE INSCRIBED BY

THE AUTHOR

MINE IS THINE.

CHAPTER I.

I HUMBLY desire, dear readers, to please you if I can, and therefore hasten to gratify an aspiration which lurks in all novel-readers' hearts—to "get into the thick of the business at once." So come with me and be summarily introduced to one or two principal personages of this little drama. Let us take them unawares, let us surprise them while they sit at meat,—eating, drinking, and (some of them, at least) making merry, on the margin of the Lake of Como, in one of the pleasantest hotels in Europe, the "Bellevue," at Cadenabbia. And do thou, old Time, turn back in thy flight a few short years, and suffer us to enter the *table-d'hôte* room of the hotel in question, on the bright evening of an early summer day in 18—.

The banquet is spread. The guests are assembled or assembling. They are of many nationalities, of diverse ranks, of most ages; each of the three sexes is represented, for more than one palpable curate bows his meek head over the flesh-pot. The noise *is* a little trying at first. The crockery *does* seem to be possessed with devils, and every glass in the room must have St Vitus's dance. Every one seems to be impatient at first — hungry, angry, vociferous. What tempers these waiters must have! Outside the window a string-band is playing a selection from the 'Barbiere.' Could anything be more appropriate? "*Figaro quà, Figaro là!*" shrieks the band. "*Kellner!*" "*Garçon!*" "*Cameriere!*" "*Waiter!*" shout the guests; and, through all the crush and the bustle, these admirable men glide about—here, there, everywhere, breathless and perspiring, but full of polyglot politeness and attention. The only calm, still, cool-looking object in the room is that tremendous head-waiter in the buff waistcoat, standing near the door, in Jove-like serenity. The guests, as they enter, pause before him to ask where they may place themselves. In that august presence, they appear to peak and dwindle. He is too great to speak, but

waves them off to their destinations, exact and unerring as omniscience. His whole air seems to say—"A good man struggling with difficulties *may* be a sight for the gods; but how much grander this, the spectacle of a great man overcoming every difficulty *without* a struggle, with a bosom as unruffled as the buff garment which envelops it!" The diapason of discord has achieved itself in the sudden collapse of that mottle-faced waiter, involving in his ruin thirteen plates, a dish of potatoes, and a bottle of Medoc; and now that the yells of yonder German have caused the last window in the room to be closed, things begin to settle down into a little more quiescence. Come, then, and let us thread the hall. Don't look at that indigestive spinster unless you wish to be petrified. Don't waste a thought upon that glorious-looking old man with the dome-like head and long white moustache. He is *not* a very distinguished general of division. He is a City man—probably a stockbroker—and it is quite conceivable that his name is Crump. Never mind the *brunette*—beautiful as a star, but nothing to *us*. Let us go on. Eat with their knives? Of course they do. The only Russian princess whose confidence I have enjoyed, ate with *her* knife—quite a trifle

when you're accustomed to it. You see that old lady dwelling in the fool's paradise of an auburn "front" and immense gutta-percha teeth? Well, next her are two men. *Voilà notre affaire.* These are my hero Cosmo Glencairn, and his friend Tom Wyedale. Yes, the fair one *is* Cosmo. Why not? Heroes ought to be dark? I deny it—not English heroes. They ought to be buff men, with blue eyes, like the Vikings. Well, there they are. Draw near to them, and listen to them, and look out for new arrivals. And now I leave you to find your way through the labyrinth of this tale, from which the gods give you and me a safe and happy deliverance.

"The menagerie seems to be fuller than usual to-night, Cosmo," said Tom; "the roaring is louder, and there seem to be several new varieties. I see a new skunk, and a chimpanzee, and a sun-fish, and a hippopotamus."

"And all that being interpreted?"

"And all that being interpreted means that we have a considerable increase in the number of our co-diners, and that the new-comers are rather a shady lot to look at."

"Not very distinguished-looking, certainly. What is the meaning of it, I wonder? It isn't near the tourists' season, and yet many of the new arrivals look like the ideal tourist—not the least like returning swallows from the Riviera or Rome."

"Not a bit of it; but, perhaps, something has been taking place in England—the Whitsuntide holidays or something."

"You pagan! we are still a fortnight from Whitsunday."

"Are we? I apologise. One forgets everything in this Sleepy Hollow. But, Whitsunday or not, if Mr Cook had shot a whole caravan into the district, we couldn't be richer in his typical followers."

"Yes, I've seen the kind of people before, in connection with a 'conductor.' It's the old problem of the flies in amber."

"Seen them before! By George, they're all here! There's the 'expansive' Briton — that underdone-looking man. See how he talks at, through, up against, down upon, everybody and everything! He has a joke for every one. He chaffs them all round, waiters included. He is button-holing the whole table with his eyes. Listen to the monster! How he laughs! You

can hear nothing else. What a fearful thing is vulgar geniality! That fellow would chaff the Pope if he could get at him.

"Then there are two or three specimens of the 'reticent' Briton. That pock-marked fellow staring so fiercely at four inches of the table in front of him, is one of them. Doesn't he look as if his pockets were full of Orsini bombs? as if he were making up his mind to let them off at once, and blow us all to smithereens? And there's another—that hectic man in the white tie, looking as if he had just picked a pocket. They are both in a white terror of being addressed in a foreign tongue; for, behold, beside one sits a restless-looking Frenchman, and by the other an affable Muscovite. Hence their woe. And there is the archæological female Briton—she may be in some other 'ology' perhaps, but she certainly goes in for 'mind' and science of some sort. They're all the same. You can't mistake them. Limp, and with that mysterious top-knot of scraggy hair gathered together from the uttermost parts of the head. She looks as if a savage had tomahawked her, and, finding the scalp unsatisfactory, had hurriedly replaced it. Doesn't she, Cosmo? Oh, how I suffered from one of the tribe at Eleusis last year! The sun

was raging, but she seated herself on a fallen capital and held me, like the Ancient Mariner, while she lectured for half an hour on the spirit of Greek Art. She had come from Athens without an escort, braving the brigands with no protection save her awful virginity; and I fear there is no doubt it got her safe back. And ah! I thought we should find him here; and there he is, sure enough, up at the end of the opposite table—and a fine specimen he is, too, of the 'domestic' Briton. You can see through all that fellow's dodges, and read him like a book. These two girls are his daughters, and he trembles for them. Every well-looking individual of the opposite sex is a hawk, ready to swoop upon his dove-cot. You, Cosmo, are a hawk."

"Thanks; I fear your definition won't permit a *tu quoque*."

"You are, as I say, in this man's perverted vision, a hawk. His mind is full of hawks and foreign counts. The foreign count is his *bête noire*, and every well-dressed foreigner is a count 'within the meaning of the Act.' Observe how he has strategised against hawks and counts. He has thrown out a flanking party on either side of the dove-cot,—that tough-looking

spinster on the left, obviously an aunt—the hobbledehoy on the right, clearly a brother; and he himself is a big gun of position in the centre, ready to go off with fearful detonations."

"The doves are rather pretty, Tom; the blue one is really a charming little *ingenue*."

"Passable—passable; and indeed I find the pink sister not without attraction. Impossible head-gear, though."

"Oh, *cela va sans dire;* at present all head-gears are impossible. Now, if you were to tilt back that terrible erection on the girl's head till it sloped from the sky-line of the head, over the neck, you would——"

"Steady, Cosmo! outlying picket alarmed and signalling to the main body. Look at the weather. Opposite window; charming evening, isn't it? What a bloom there is on that hill opposite! How the last rays of the sun are bringing out the tints of everything!"

"Including that bottle of 'Gattinara,' which has been with *you* ever since we sat down. Pass it, before it is quite empty. I'll tell you what it is, Tom, it is not a remunerative system going shares in wine with a talkative fellow like you. You don't give yourself time to eat much, but you do contrive to drink like a whale."

"Do I? The action is quite mechanical, I assure you."

"Very likely, but it empties the bottle quite as effectually as if it were deliberate."

"After all, what is there in *one* bottle of 'Gattinara'?"

"Precisely what I wish to discover. Pass it."

"Cornish men? No, surr; I never fouled a Cornish man—not to know him." Thus spake a cadaverous American gentlemen, who sat opposite the two friends, addressing an English neighbour, and splitting up his remarks into short, irregular sentences.

"They are splendid men, I can tell you," said the neighbour; "they're descended from the ancient Britons, you know."

"Are they, now? Well, I niver met an ancient Briton. But if any of them were to give a look down Texas way. They'd keep quiet about their descendants when they went back, I guess. They've got a kind of a man down there, surr, that mostly runs seventy-three to seventy-seven inches. That's good enough, ain't it? You've heard of William G. Howkins?"

"I think not."

"Ah! that was a kind of a man that stood ninety-two inches. And a fraction. And when he killed the grizzly that ran to 900 pounds in its skin and claws. You've heard of *that* bear?"

"No, I can't say I have."

"Wall, he took and carried that thar grizzly, and went browsin' all around the town with that thar carcass on his back. To show him. That's the kind of man William G. Howkins was. And that's the kind of man they raise, down Texas way. I guess an ancient Briton would feel rather mean and skinny down there. I guess he'd feel downright d——d ashamed of his descendants. When he saw them again."

"Howkins must have been a Goliath."

"Wall, he *was* above the middle height. But he ain't the size now. Not since the war."

"How do you mean?"

"Wall, there was a cannon-ball that was a trifle quick for him at Gettysburg. He got his legs chipped. And shortened up, at that time, seven or eight inches. But, I guess, they'd still show the balance of him in Cornwall. For money. W. G. H. wasn't descended from nobody. You bet."

"A've harrd ov a Glasca man——" began

another gentleman, in the solemn doric of North Britain.

"Be japers!" interrupted a sprightly-looking neighbour—"be japers! Mr Howkins must be own brother to Larry O'Toole's aunt.

> 'That had niver a father,
> And sorra a mother,
> But jist poured herself out from a jug of potheen.'"

"A racklack a Glasca man—u'm thinkin' his name was Fechnie——" Interruption, however, again befell the Scot, for an excitable-looking Frenchman, who had been intently listening to the dialogue, suddenly gave tongue.

"Messieurs," he exclaimed, "comment cela s'explique-t-il? Moi, je comprends parfaitement l'Anglais, mais il n'y a pas moyen de vous comprendre, vous autres. Vous parlez trois—mais, oui!—quatre langues, entre vous, tout à la fois. Que veut dire ce 'Larree O'Toal'? Qu'est ce que c'est que ce 'Glass Cow'? Comment expliquez vous cet abominable 'Racklaxe'? Dites donc, je vous en prie, comment——" But here a shout of laughter reduced the Gaul to foaming silence.

The meal went bustling on. The blended tumult of a hundred voices rose and fell, as interval and onset relieved each other; but at every revival the pitch of voices seemed higher,

and the laughter more strenuous than before,—save where, like veritable "Towers of Silence," the types of reticence sat wrapt in a taciturnity that seemed to become palpable—to make itself felt—even amid that human Babel, with its crashing symphonies from delf and metal. All round the table quaint idiosyncrasies progressively evolved themselves before the laughing eyes of Cosmo Glencairn and his loquacious friend. About a third of the dinner had been achieved. The American Eagle was soaring sublime, on reckless wings of hyperbole and myth. The Scotchman, who had failed to find a single taker for some creaking observations on the bothy system, as pursued in Ross-shire, was watching the Eagle, with the intention of a trapper in his eye. His French neighbour continued to mutter, "Il n'y a pas moyen de comprendre ces gueux d'Anglais." One female representative of British mind, thinking entomology to be a good light dinner subject—safe to draw—had plunged into the habits of the "Death's-head moth," and secured, for a time, the sympathy of several people in her vicinity, including a curate, a governess, with two female charges, a broken-English German, and a highly-intelligent-looking old gentleman, whose eye seemed to blaze with un-

qualified appreciation, but who, as it afterwards transpired, was deaf and blind. But suddenly another of the sisterhood, who sat opposite, unsuspected up to this time and *incog.*, unmasked herself and came into action, opening fire with an "ichthyosaurus," and following it up with "flint-headed weapons," which staggered the curate, demoralised the pupils, and elicited a long-drawn "So!" from the German. Number One, finding the Death's-head moth altogether unequal to the position, withdrew it in favour of "greywacke," which, to a certain extent, rallied confidence, until "Primeval Man," "the Moabite Stone," and "the Panathenaic Frieze," fired off by Number Two in rapid succession, left Number One without any following, save the appreciative old man. But Number Two did not long continue the heroine of the occasion; for the expansive Briton, expanding theologically, laid an irreverent paw upon the Pentateuch, which roused the meek but true-hearted curate, and, in a pause of silence and expectation, all the table awaited the encounter between Christian and Apollyon. During this pause, when dinner was half achieved, a new arrival again diverted public attention, and concentrated it on very different objects.

The new party was preceded by a gaudy and corpulent courier, who, after questioning the buff-cinctured Jove with an air of impious equality, marshalled his *protégés* to their seats, with looks of scorn and menace, cast on either side, as who should say, "Tremble, O ye base groundlings! the social Juggernaut is upon you." The public, however, paid small attention to this tremendous personage, for all eyes were more pleasantly attracted to the lady and gentleman who followed him. The lady was beautiful. It is a bold assertion, an apple of discord, which we should hesitate to hurl into any assembly on the entrance of any living woman. Did its sculptor succeed in expressing a true ideal of Beauty, or did he only immortalise the Insipid, in the Venus dei Medici? Are Rubens's often-painted wives glorious types of vigorous and beautiful womanhood? or are they only two naked Flemish fishwomen, wallowing in a superabundance of garish flesh? Specimens these, selected at random, of the diversities of opinion upon all questions as to beauty depicted by human hands; and how much greater are the diversities when the claims of this, or that, living woman are *sub lite!* I make, then, a bold assertion; but as the lady

is invisible to the reader, I make it boldly, not fearing contradiction, unless, indeed, some may take exception to certain features which I may state to have been distinctive of the fair entrant —sea-grey eyes, to wit,—grey or blue, I know not which, but the colour of the Mediterranean when the sun has just gone down, and left upon calm waters a *look*, between the blue of noon-tide and the steely sheen that comes on them with the gloaming,—sea-grey eyes and bronze-brown hair, a pure complexion, a nose delicately *retroussé*, a mouth like the bow of Cupid, and a figure slight, but genuine and complete—not that composition of door, hay-truss, and pillow, with which art, supplementing natural deficiencies, contrives nowadays to make a travesty of the "human *form* divine." All these were attributes of the young lady in question; and I trust that, on these simple data, no reader will be captious enough to found a theory that she was not (what I distinctly assert she was and is) beautiful. It is a goodly thing to be beautiful; it is a glorious thing to be young (dwell upon this, rejoice in it, revel in it, O ye young, in the days of your youth!),—but to be both young and beautiful is to be twice blest; and this fortunate lady enjoyed that

double beatitude. And besides all this—an attribute more exquisite still—she possessed that subtle, magical charm which words cannot define nor art imitate, but which nature, culture, and association, all three, combine to produce, weaving it out of movement, manner, expression, carriage, and I know not what besides, and which can only, but most feebly, be expressed in words by the commonplace phrase, "a thorough-bred air." Many of the guests at the *table d'hôte* might have been indifferent to her beauty, or denied its existence altogether; but the *air noble* reached them all: so that every eye was turned admiringly in her direction, and the duty of eating strenuously up to a rather high contract price was pretty generally suspended for at least five-and-twenty seconds. Certain eclipses took place. The charms of half-a-dozen pink-and-white damsels, who looked but now so fresh and bright and pretty, vanished abruptly, just as one has seen a bunch of comely village-garden flowers grow coarse and gaudy when placed near some exotic, exquisite in its simple purity of form and hue. As she passed up the hall, the sun offered an inspiration which Raphael might have prized; for the last rays, streaming through the windows, smote upon the

deep masses of her burnished hair, and seemed to set a glory round about her small and shapely head.

"A burning beauty!" whispered Tom Wyedale.

Cosmo said nothing, but the thought written in his face was "Oh! dea certe!"

"And," said the American, following up a commendatory remark of his own—"and, I guess, the old hoss looks like blood and bone, and beans into the bargain."

These irreverent remarks were applied to the gentleman who followed the beautiful apparition. He was a tall, old man, with features patrician rather than handsome, and an expression well-bred rather than courteous; in carriage upright, in movement deliberately angular; clear of complexion, with cold blue eyes, and slight but emphatic whiskers; highly collared, amply neckerchiefed; tightly buttoned-up, as to his olive frock-coat,—his *ensemble*, in a word, recalling the now extinct, grand air of the old school.

His temper was not in a satisfactory condition. He had a grievance, which exploded every now and then in far-reaching fragments of angry sentences, and which proved to be that

he was very late for dinner, but by no fault of his own; and the difficulty of bringing the blame home to the real delinquent was that which now exercised his mind. Some men—nurses of their wrath—cannot be satisfied until they get it into the concrete. They can't say, "Confound *it!*"—they must be able to say, "Confound *him*, *them*, or *you!*" The old gentleman was of this nature, and he was hunting for a personality wherewith to connect his grievance. Every one, from his courier and his daughter's maid, had, of course, shifted the blame to some subordinate, so that half the household were implicated, even the hall-porter being entangled in the affair. Several of these officials were brought up for examination in the *table-d'hôte* room, and a sort of running court of inquiry occupied the old gentleman in the intervals between each tepid *plat*. It ended by the summary conviction of the head-waiter, whose lofty bearing had at once inflamed the spirit of the old gentleman, and pointed him out, without further evidence, as the guilty person. So the case was closed by a few powerful observations addressed to that astonished magnate.

"Don't answer me!" cried the angry guest;

"it is, as I say, all owing to your abominable carelessness."

"Beg your pardon, my lord; every one knows that the *table-d'hôte* hour——"

"Every one, sir, is a *very* different person from me and my daughter. I know nothing about your *table-d'hôte*, except that I never saw a worse dinner or more execrable attendance. I shall report this to the direction, and also about your manner, which is distinctly offensive. Go away."

"Beg pardon, my lord——"

"Go away, sir! get out of my sight!"—whereupon the man went, crestfallen; and the American, regarding the old peer with a curious veneration that could hardly have been surpassed on his lordship's own domain, muttered—

"Darned if it ain't *something* to be a lord! A real English lord! They all knock under to *that*. That all-mighty waiter would have laughed at any of your counts or barons. Or even a duke. If he spelt himself D-U-C. But the real article kicks 'em all about."

"After all," smiled his English neighbour, "you see something in our aristocracy."

"Yes, surr. Something to be ashamed of. I see something in human natur', too. And I'm

ashamed of *that*. Human natur', surr, is a born toady. I ain't proud of *that* fact. But that don't prevent me seeing that while it *is* sich, it ain't a bad thing to be a lord. Like the old crocodile over the way. It's better to kick than to be kicked—ain't it? That's sense, I guess. Holloa, waiter! who's the lord?"

The waiter didn't know, and was despatched to the bureau to bring the required information in writing—which being done, the Yankee read the name, and said—

"Wall, I hope Lord Germistoune's property's big. He wants elbow-room. It would take about four of our parishes, I guess, to let him turn in. Without grazing."

The tedious dinner came to a close at last, and the company melted gradually away, to take their coffee *al fresco* while listening to the band; or to be rowed about upon the lake, in the dreamy twilight between sunset and moon-rise. As Cosmo and Tom left the room, they passed close by Lord Germistoune and his daughter, just as his lordship, still unappeased, was remarking—

"The whole thing is distinctly monstrous. They have only now brought me these letters

and papers, which have been awaiting us here since yesterday."

"How very tiresome and stupid!" said the young lady; "but I daresay it won't happen again, now they know you."

"I shall take uncommon good care it does not have a chance of happening again, for I will leave the house."

"Dear papa, there is no other hotel."

"Not on this side; but two, at least, at Bellaggio. Now, I propose to be rowed over there this evening, and secure rooms for to-morrow. If I sent that idiot Stefano, he would be sure to make mistakes. Would you care to come? It is a lovely evening, and but a short row. Perhaps you are too tired, though?"

"Not at all; I should like of all things to go with you."

"Very well: if you are ready in half an hour, that will do. The moon is nearly full now, and we need not hurry. In the meantime I will try to get a cup of coffee outside."

CHAPTER II.

THE two friends passed an hour or so lounging by the lake, till the moon began to rise over the hills, and then Cosmo said—

"Behold the hour, and the boat of Pietro! Let us hail him, and get afloat. That little breeze, just beginning to arrive from the Engadine, is a godsend, after the stifling heat of the day. Let us get right out into the middle of the lake, and meet it and make the most of it, and see the moon rising. The moonlight effects here are superb; and there is something in this air that makes one appreciative. The moon makes poets of us all down here—the moon and the lake, between them."

Cosmo was right. Surely his must be a rusty soul that takes no gleam of radiance and delight from the beautiful communion of the two! Beautiful! There is no word in any language good enough, beautiful enough, to describe it.

The moon must be in love with Como. Fancy-free for all the world besides, the "imperial vot'ress" must have bestowed upon that favoured lake the solitary passion of her mysterious heart. Is not this why her countenance changes as she passes over these enchanted and enchanting waters? Is not this why the fashion of her beauty there grows softer, tenderer, dreamier? Is it not for this that there she moves with such slow and lingering languor, as all those who, with seeing eyes, have beheld her, will attest? Yes, she is in love with Como; and as lovers' faces change at meeting the adored, so is she transfigured when she looks over the hills that shelter the object of her devotion. Lover-like she comes, making the most of her own charms. Lover-like she glorifies the beauties of the beloved with her idealising light. And oh! most lover-like she moves in that dear presence, slowly, rapt, concentrated—piercing with her glances the solemn depths of the enamoured lake, which lies gazing up at her, earnest and silent, needing no voice for a reply; for she can see into that clear, deep heart, and there behold the transcript of her pure and holy flame. Though "Adam lost Paradise—eternal tale!"—there have still been left to us—few, indeed, and

far between—scattered over the face of mother earth, certain spots of heavenly beauty and repose: Edens, the gates of which no flaming swords nor "watch of wingèd Hydra" guard; where the flowers are not too obviously disfigured by the serpent's trail; where even the spirit of man, if not divine, at least possesses some of the calm, suave attributes of divinity. Surely Lake Como and its margin are of these. The day had been one of sultriest heat, and a kind of thundery silence had brooded over the water, and over all the country round about. Closed jalousies had darkened the faces of the beautiful villas on the lake. The luxuriant creepers, clothing their terrace-walls, hung down limp and dejected, as though trying to reach the water, and find coolness or death therein. The fountains in the gardens seemed to send up languid and unwilling jets, dim to the eye, and with no joyous music for the ear. From Tremezzo to Menaggio, from Bellaggio to Varenna, you might have counted the visible population on your fingers—a few languid forms, motionless for the most part, or only moving a few unwilling paces, to subside again into inevitable stagnation. Not a boat to be seen on the lake save one—a large *contadino* barque, laden with

market-produce, which put off early from Varenna, but soon gave up the business as hopeless, and lay all day at the opening of Lake Lecco, the motionless cradle of its slumbering crew. A terribly hot and breathless day it had been; so that when the breeze sprang up at sunset, it was like Nature's sigh of relief after a long ordeal of *ennui* and fatigue—as who should say, "Gone at last!" and then everything awoke and was changed after that. The moon came up and gave her light. The darkened eyes of the villas opened and sent forth their light. The spray of the fountains leaped gaily up and caught the moonbeams and tossed them about, like genii playing with handfuls of diamonds. And the flowers, instead of closing their petals, like conventional flowers, must have opened them for the first time that day—so sweet became the night with their breath, so rich with all the fragrances of summer. And from either shore floated tempered strains—the sounds of all manner of musical instruments; and on the lake came airy-looking boats, many gaily illuminated with coloured lamps and torches—all vocal, some with melodious laughter, some with the voice of singing. Even the big *contadino* barque, under way again with sail and oar, stole

picturesquely and harmoniously along, and the gentle plash of the oars acted as a pleasant symphony to the well-worn, but captivating Neapolitan ditty which the rowers sang, to the worship and the wooing of the much-hymned "Marianina"—

"Marianina! Marianina!
Cambia, cambia tuoi pensiere,
Non andar coi bersagliere,
Se ti vuoi maritar!
Se ti vuoi maritar!
Se ti vuoi maritar!
Marianina mia! carina mia!
Dammi un bacio o mi fai morir!"

Upon these waters bathed in the dreamy lovelight of the summer moon, and into this scene, worthier of dreamland than the workaday world, the two friends put forth, with no special object to decide the direction of their little boat, save only to get into the middle of the lake. Once there, the breeze met, the point of view reached, Tom Wyedale, who was by no means of a contemplative turn, demanded of his friend whither he should order the boatman to shape his course. Tom, by the by, who erroneously believed himself to know a little Italian, had stipulated that, for practice' sake, he should be allowed on all occasions to act as spokesman.

"It does not matter," said Cosmo—"anywhere."

"That's rather vague."

"Yes, but vagueness is the very thing for a night like this, which would be outraged by anything so prosaic as the definite. Tell the old man to move vaguely and promiscuously about."

"Rather trying to my stock of Italian, which is rather for solid, than fancy purposes. *Avanti*, Pietro!"

"*Si, signore!*" cried the old boatman, plunging his oars with alacrity into the water, and heading away for Bellaggio at racing-pace.

"Too fast—too fast," cried Cosmo. "The old rascal is thinking of that wine-shop under the colonnade. He has arranged our programme and his own. We are to hang about and listen to the Bellagian band for an hour, while he devotes himself to the dismal wine of the country and that mysterious game of fingers. Stop, stop!"

"*Fermatevi*, Pietro!" cried Tom; "and now whither?"

"Everywhere."

"*Da per tutto*, Pietro."

"*Si signore;*" and interpreting his instructions to perfection, he subsided into a slow, monotonous stroke, and shaped a serpentine course.

"What fellows these Italians are, to be sure!"

said Cosmo, as a boat-load of minstrelsy passed at a little distance, and filled the air with strains that seemed to interpret the very spirit of the hour and scene. "What an instinctive taste they have! Your English musician would have destroyed everything here by something horribly jerky and jigging. But these men have woven into their music the moonlight and the orange-trees and the sweetness of orange-blossoms, the bright villas, the pleasant vineyards, the deep woods, the gardens, the sprightly fountains, the melancholy lake, and the happy languid *far niente* that suits a midsummer night."

"Holloa! I say——"

"This is the very music of a midsummer night's dream. Titania might have been lulled to sleep by it on that delectable bank of wild thyme."

"Come, Cosmo, this is all very hard upon me."

"Yes, to be sure, my dear fellow; a thousand apologies! I was thinking aloud. Pearls are an offence to swine. I'll change the subject."

"It strikes me—all this is very fine, of course, —but it strikes me that this same sentiment of yours is rather of a sensual kind. I'll call it sensuous, if you like. You're a sensuous fellow, Cosmo—that's the word."

"Well, I don't object. I quite believe that

the great thing in life, so as to get the most out of it, is to be thoroughly adaptive; in a scene like this to be *able* to be 'sensuous,'—a sybarite, if you please, without prejudice to my being metaphysical, spiritual, stoical, realistic, positive, and practical—each on the fitting occasion. There is a time for all things. A one-sided man must be constantly out of tune with his surroundings. Life has so many phases, and such incessant changes. Therefore, to-night, let me be sensuous—if you please."

"A versatile man never comes to anything."

"An old parrot-cry—and not true; but even if it were true, he would come to nothing, happily—and happiness is the *summum bonum* of my to-night's philosophy, which also forbids me to indulge in prosy speculation; so don't go on with it, you Philistine!"

"You began it."

"Argument of any sort is also impossible, or I would deny it."

"Well, philosophy or not philosophy, it is very jolly out on the lake to-night. I wonder what that pretty girl thinks of it! also, I wonder if her papa has got over the coldness of the soup and the lukewarmness of the attendance!"

"Pretty? do you call her *pretty?*"

"Yes, I do, most emphatically. What! you don't mean to say that you don't admire her?"

"No, I mean to say nothing of the sort—but *pretty!* How like you that is, Tom! I would not insult beauty of that type by calling its possessor pretty. There is an elevation, a soul, a purity in her beauty that I have seldom, if ever, seen before, in a human face. I know a picture for which she might have sat. I have not seen it for years, but it has always haunted me. It is, or was, in an obscure little Italian village perched away up in the hills above the Riviera. Some old cardinal, who was born there, left it with the rest of his collection to his native place. It is a Madonna, by Sasso Ferrato; not a replica of any of his well-known pictures, but a unique original—different altogether from any of his other Madonnas, yet authentic, and of extraordinary beauty and grace. The moment I saw this young lady I was reminded of it. It is my beau-ideal of female loveliness. When I first saw the picture I was reminded of the verse—

"The star-like beauty of immortal eyes."

When I have thought of the picture, I have always thought of the phrase. To-night I have seen the conception of the painter realised; and

in mortal eyes I have beheld the star-like beauty of which the poet dreamed."

"My dear Cosmo, this is a very desperate state of things. You must really take more exercise, and get up early in the morning. I have been suspecting for some time that there is a slight tendency to hepatitis. Do you remember poor Oliver Lee? He died of it, you know, and was really comforted for his mortal sickness by its big name. He insisted on it always, and was continually checking off his symptoms—'clouded vision, morbid fancies, loss of appetite, noises in the head, insomnia,' &c. These were some of them; and I do think, Cosmo, that the vision must be clouded and the fancy morbid which transforms the *beauté de diable* into divine loveliness."

"*Beauté de diable!* I suppose you think you've achieved a neat antithesis, but you're wrong; for between the *beauté de diable* and divine beauty there is the same connection as there is between the beauty of innocence and the beauty of holiness."

"Oh, this is terrible! Pray be sensuous again; it's better than being metaphysical after a *table-d'hôte* dinner. I suppose, then, you have fallen in love with the Madonna at first sight?"

"The reasoning of a chambermaid! Well, even if I *had* fallen in love with her, it would not be at first sight; for in seeing her to-night, I only see the figure of the picture in a new *pose*, with a change of drapery, in a different light. Perhaps I *am* in love with the ideal which the picture suggests; if so, I shall certainly be faithful to it, for the ideal never disappoints, and the real generally does so. Therefore I would rather avoid this young lady."

"Ha, ha, ha! ho! he!—also hum!"

"If she were to fulfil the promise of the picture, it would be something like the story of Pygmalion and Galatea coming true. That is not a likely occurrence. No; were she never so charming, she would fail to reach the perfection which Sasso Ferrato has helped me to conceive. It would be impossible not to associate her real qualities with my ideal; and since, as I say, the real almost inevitably disappoints, my beautiful illusion would be dissipated and my idol shattered. I shall be careful not to come in contact with the young lady."

"Well, I am sure I have no objection; and, to tell you the truth, it just occurs to me that I may as well fall in love with her myself. I have not adventured in that line as yet; but I daresay

I might succeed, because I am so 'adaptive,' as you call it; and there would be a dramatic propriety in being in love on Lake Como, which I am not insensible to. Besides, there's nothing else to do here but smoke and loll about on the lake; and I daresay both these occupations would gain by a flavour of the tender passion. Yes, Cosmo, consider me in love, until further instructions, and respect me accordingly — no *brusquerie,* no roughness with the blossom which now begins to expand before your eyes."

"You in love? You?"

"I—even I. You ought to be immensely obliged to me. You're out of the running, you know, and evidently developing into a bard. It will be a godsend to you to watch the affair. Besides, you will be of serious service in gooseberry-picking; and you are just the man to *intriguer* that combustible old gentleman—you're so 'adaptive' and 'many-sided,' don't you see?"

"Well, I can conceive many things, but not Tom Wyedale as the hero of a love-romance."

"Nothing happens but the improbable, my boy; and if there are a few deficiencies in my composition, you can idealise me, you know. With your talent, I think you ought to turn out of this material a very first-class sort of hero."

"Somehow I don't see it."

"Ah! you do us both injustice."

"I could hardly give romantic attributes to a round of beef or a pot of porter."

"You wrong me, Cosmo—you wrong me; but it is the old story. A great man's school-fellows are notoriously the last to recognise his great qualities. The school-dunce develops into an intellectual giant, but his early brother-dunces can never forget the fool's-cap which he shared with them. I forgive you, old man."

"Very good of you; but I can't say I remember that interesting bond between you and me."

"Likely enough; memory plays sad pranks in such matters."

"I can remember, however, that *you* were the biggest dunce in your form."

"Imagination in fault this time; it constantly clouds the memory."

"I don't think I require to call upon my memory, or use the past tense, in speaking of your dunceship."

"Hepatitis! hepatitis! Clouded vision, morbid fancies, noises in the head. We must have you overhauled. There is a manslayer in the hotel; consult him."

"Hang it, Tom, what a bore you are! I feel

so tired of you sometimes, it appears to me a mystery how we are such friends."

"Candid friend! it *is* difficult to say how it should be so. The general rules are horribly contradictory. Like draws to like; but then, contrasts fascinate each other. Perhaps the endearing ties in this case are gratitude on your part, and a sense of protectorship on mine—continued from earliest youth until now."

"As how?"

"How? Why, who licked Jack Falls for bullying you?"

"I don't remember; probably I licked him myself."

"You! Why, Jack could have eaten you. Who supplied you with cricket-bats, like a brother?"

"No one did. I remember your giving me a bat for my silver chain and my white mouse that had one eye pink and the other green—but the handle of the bat turned out to be sprung."

"Well, hang it! I gave you back the mouse, although I was devoted to it."

"Yes, you gave it me back to avoid a swishing, when white mice were forbidden under penalties. And then, when the holidays came—although I had run the risk of keeping it all the

half—you pretended you had only lent it to me, to oblige me, and wanted to take it back."

"Oh, I can't go back upon all these trumpery little details. I only remember that I was excessively generous to you about a mouse or mice and cricket-bats."

"Generous?"

"Yes; and then the verses."

"I suppose you'll say next that you wrote mine for me?"

"By no means; that would have been a doubtful kindness. No; I frequently allowed you to write mine for me, which was glorious practice for a little fellow—upon my word, it was quite fatherly of me. And then that row about Mother Willet's orchard, when I saved you—and—and—these and a hundred other little kindnesses, I suppose, must have stamped themselves into the plastic nature of your youth, and have been confirmed in manhood by the sense of protection which an unpractical (shall I say a weaker?) nature derives from association with one which is practical and philosophically robust. That, I take it, is the explanation from your point of view; and from mine, it is, of course, not wonderful to find a generous spirit attaching itself to the object of its protection and generosity."

"And looking out watchfully, no doubt, for fresh opportunities of exercising these qualities?"

"Most distinctly. I will be true to my mission, Cosmo. Lean upon me; I won't desert you."

"Now, Tom, you villain, I don't like this vein at all. I seem to remember similar flourishes in connection with certain financial embarrassments, which always ended in being rather embarrassing to myself. Upon my honour, now, I shouldn't be a bit surprised to find that there was a temporary difficulty about an hotel bill, or a temporary but equally pressing necessity for two or three hundred pounds."

"My dear Cosmo, nor I! What intuitions the fellow has at times, to be sure! To tell you the truth, my banker is not a very good fellow."

"No?"

"No, not at all. I may say I'm ashamed of him. He can never see more than one side of a question, and his view of that is limited and groovy. Now a banker ought not to be groovy; ought he?"

"Perhaps not."

"No. Grooviness is inconsistent with the

elevated intelligence which one has a right to expect in a banker. Just listen to a case in point. I——"

Tom's statement, however, was interrupted by a shout from a boat at a little distance. The two friends had been rowed down near to the Isola di San Giovanni; there they had turned, and, after sweeping close in to the Bellagian shore, were now slowly heading for home. The boat which hailed was behind them, motionless, and no other boats were in the neighbourhood.

"They must be hailing us," said Cosmo.

"Tourists full of new wine," replied Tom. "Let them howl."

The shout was repeated. Cosmo was for returning. "Something may be wrong," he said.

"Let them rave. *Avanti!*" quoth Tom.

Then, as they got under way again, the cry was repeated with such energy that it became clear that something was the matter; and they turned back. As they approached the boat, a sharp English voice upbraided them, in fierce, broken Italian, for their tardiness; but as they were all still under the shadow of the hills, the speaker was unrecognisable.

"*Subito! subito!*" replied old Pietro, leisurely paddling along.

Subito! D——n it! do you call *that subito?*" cried the voice.

"*Subito! subito!—pazienza! pazienza!—che va piano va lontano,*" said, or rather sang, the grinning boatman, as though soothing an impatient child; and then, easing his oars as he ran alongside, "*Eccoci, signore!*"

"It is the '*beauté de diable*' and her papa, as I am a living, loving sinner," whispered Tom. "How prompt is the arrow of Fate!"

"You are English gentlemen, I presume," said Lord Germistoune—for it was he—"and I do think you might have been a little readier to answer my cry for assistance."

"But what is the matter, sir?" asked Tom.

"Matter, sir? Drowning's the matter—that's all." He then explained that the boatman had snapped one of his oars, and in jumping up to try to rescue the half which fell into the water, had sent "his great blundering foot through one of the rotten planks; and the boat's filling—that's all."

"We had no conception that there was anything seriously wrong," said Tom.

The old lord then tartly suggested transhipment instead of conversation. "If you will put us on shore anywhere at Bellaggio, we can get

another boat. Our destination is Cadenabbia; but don't let us inconvenience you."

"Our way would be yours in any case," said Cosmo, addressing the lady; "but, as it happens, we also are bound for Cadenabbia."

The transhipment then took place, and the damaged boat was taken in tow, her boatman continuing in her, and indignantly denying any danger. Tom contrived to dispose the new guests so that he sat between the young lady and her father. And now he began to play off a little comedy for the amusement of his friend; and falling into the *rôle* which he had prescribed for himself in his farcical conversation a few minutes before, proceeded to dramatise the part of the "aspirant" who, in "sapping up to a position," makes almost as much love to the lady's belongings as to herself. Cosmo, who knew the "devilry" of which his friend was capable, feared he might overdo the part. The gravity of his face and manner were, however, unimpeachable; and all his attentions, divided pretty equally between father and daughter, passed muster in the most creditable way. Cosmo was very far from approving of a joke of the sort, and he soon had fresh cause for disapproval and annoyance; for Tom, out of pure wantonness,

began to drag his name in, in such a way as to throw discredit upon him, and in such a way as, antithetically, to suggest his own superior merit in all respects.

"I cannot," he said to the young lady, "sufficiently blame myself for not insisting on our immediate return. My friend is a little obstinate, but I ought to have combated him. He *would* have it that the cry came from some party of tourists who had been—had been—a—dining somewhere. The tone of voice ought to have been sufficient for him. To *me* it was unmistakably the cry of a gentleman in distress. I ought to have been firm with him."

This spirited perversion of facts brought Lord Germistoune into the field at once. "Your friend's scepticism," he said, with a very grim look at Cosmo, "might have had disastrous results for us. He might have been willing to give us the benefit of the doubt, I think."

Cosmo was about to reply, when the young lady interposed. "I am sure," she said, "that you came as quickly as possible. Papa, you are really too *exigeant*. The accident seems scarcely to have happened, and here we are, safe and sound, on board another boat. Papa is too *exigeant*," she continued, with a laugh, "but

you must make allowance for him. He has had a sad chapter of accidents to-day. Have you not, papa?"

"Accidents? I don't call them accidents," snorted the old lord; "downright, deliberate insolence and mismanagement—these are not accidents. Would you believe it, sir, I was made twenty-five minutes late for dinner to-day by false information?"

"Yes, I observed that you came in late for dinner," said Tom, in a voice of sweetest sympathy; "and I feared there had been some of the usual negligence. In fact, I think I said to my friend, 'Here is the old, old story again; it is really getting too insufferable.'"

"Ah! you confirm me?"

"Indeed I do."

"And then, that head-waiter!"

"Oh! *he?*—he is notoriously an impostor."

"And his insolence!"

"Insolence! Now, I daresay he answered you?"

"Ah! that he did, and most improperly."

"There, Cosmo!" said Tom, turning to his friend with the air of a man who, after a protracted controversy, at length finds an argument which gives him the victory beyond dispute—

"there, Cosmo! I suppose you won't support your friend after *that;*" and then, before Cosmo had time to say anything—"to *me,* that man is the incarnation of stupid impertinence. If it had not been for my friend here, I would have brought the matter to a point long ago, by going frankly to the direction, and simply saying, 'Either that head-waiter is dismissed, or I leave the hotel.'"

"Quite right—quite right!" cried the old gentleman; "and I'd have done it myself—I'd have done it myself. Then, they keep back the letters, and have no excuse to make. The porter——"

"Oh, the porter! simply a *cretin.*"

"And what business have they to employ *cretins?*"

"Part of the system—part of the system."

"So it would seem; and it's no better over here. I have just been over to the 'Serbellone' to look for rooms; and there, I protest to you, I was treated like—like a scavenger. I said the rooms smelt of rats. The manager denied this brusquely; said it had been the chateau of a *grand seigneur,* and *couldn't* smell of rats. I told him that I believed the walls were lined with dead rats; that the floors and the roofs were full of them; and that if there were no

living ones there, it was simply because the house was crumbling to pieces with dry-rot, and going to fall. The manager then requested me to leave the premises—*me*—actually—in so many words, and stated that in no case should I have rooms. I gave him my name, which produced no sort of effect. I said I would expose him. He replied that that was my affair, and a matter of complete indifference to him; and I was, as nearly as possible, hustled out of the house. Now, did you ever hear anything half so monstrous?—did you ever? did you ever? did you ever? Eh? hum? what?"

Tom received this tale of wrong with immense sympathy, interjecting little groans of indignation at critical parts.

"I think," continued the old gentleman, "the whole place seems to have changed. Twenty years ago it was charming; but there is a sort of an infernal democratic twang about it now, that upsets me—upsets me. Don't you see a change?"

"Oh, certainly; nothing could be more marked," replied Tom, who had seen the lake for the first time one week before. "It's all deteriorated—sadly deteriorated," he added, with a comprehensive wave of his hand, which appeared

to include the whole district, and even the lake and the sky, in the condemnation of being rat-eaten and of having a democratic twang.

The old gentleman was greatly mollified by all this sympathy; but addressed himself exclusively to Tom, who had contrived, out of sheer wanton fun, to put his friend in the light of a malefactor.

"It is very disappointing," said the young lady; "we intended to enjoy ourselves so much here, and now all these *contretemps* have darkened our prospects."

"You are not disappointed in the beauty of the lake, I am sure?" said Cosmo, who had hitherto kept silence, and was now immediately rewarded by a furtive kick from his friend, meant to imply that he must not trespass on another man's preserves.

"No, indeed," was the reply; "I never, even in my dreams, saw anything half so lovely."

Tom made rather a floundering attempt to construct a gallant speech on these premisses, and the lady went on—

"One could not say too much in its praise; or rather, perhaps, one cannot say too little. There are some things that seem to be above the power of words."

"Things that ought only to be painted, you mean," said Tom; "and you are an artist, without doubt?"

"Oh, in a very, very humble way; but papa *really* is."

"Oh, how I envy him!" cried Tom, with rapture; "this must be an artist's paradise—points of view from land and water at discretion, unrivalled effects of light and shade, *and*—and—all that sort of thing," including another kick for Cosmo. "You won't allow these mishaps to drive you away *immediately?*" he continued, with much earnestness.

"Ah! I don't know; papa *must* be comfortable, and——"

"And *will* be so, my dear," interposed her father; "and is certainly not going to be hunted out of the place by a pack of innkeepers. No, no."

"Bravo!" murmured Tom.

"I'm situated in this way," continued Lord Germistoune—"Gull has ordered me to the Engadine. Why Gull has ordered me to the Engadine, I daresay Gull doesn't know himself—I don't; but doctors are tyrants, and these are my tyrant's orders. Now, it seems one can't go up there for a month to come, on account of

the hard weather in the mountains, and I had decided to spend that month here — and *here* I *will* spend it; and I'll tell you what it is, since there is no hotel fit for a gentleman to live in, I'll take a villa. That will be a lesson for them. Yes, I'll take a nice little villa to-morrow morning,—eh? hum? what?"

"I fear," said Tom, "it may be rather difficult to find one for so short a time, and at such short notice."

"Excuse me, I think not. There may, perhaps, be difficulties; but they shall be overcome. I'll take a nice little villa to-morrow morning. What?"

"Papa is a most determined character, you must know; he would rather buy a villa or build one than be beaten."

"I generally contrive to have my own way, Esmè, as you know."

"Oh yes, dear papa, I *do* know; only too well sometimes," she added, with a laugh. "You are a most formidable person when thwarted; but on this occasion I applaud your firmness—a little selfishly, perhaps — for I am so glad we are to stay on in this lovely place."

"It will be an example to them," chuckled Lord Germistoune; "I'll take a nice little villa

in the morning." He gloated over the idea which had only occurred to him in the course of the conversation, and which seemed to offer a pleasant salve of vengeance for his outraged dignity.

"You must immortalise the lake with your pencil," said Tom to the lady.

"Oh no; but papa may. Indeed he has a large portfolio of sketches done here years ago. They first made me wish to come here."

Then Tom fell to cunning questioning as to the views selected, expressing a burning curiosity to know how this and that subject had been treated, the conditions of light at the time, and so forth, invariably pronouncing the old gentleman's artistic selection to have been precisely what it ought to have been, and generally surrounding him with such a comfortable atmosphere of appreciation and applause, that, when the boat reached the shore, he was in high good-humour. "Most agreeable, gentlemanlike fellow," he murmured to his daughter; "must make his acquaintance formally." Then turning to the two friends, he thanked them very courteously for the service they had rendered, and even went so far as to hint at a vague regret for having been betrayed into impatient language

at the moment of rescue. "Let me offer you my card," he said, in conclusion; "I am Lord Germistoune." The friends having duly handed over theirs in return, were presented, with considerable pomp and ceremony, to "My daughter, Miss Douglas." It then occurred to Lord Germistoune that Mr Wyedale's name was familiar to him. "It reminds me," he said, "of one of my oldest and dearest friends. We sat in the House of Commons together for years, when he was member for ——shire. Was he a relation of yours?"

"He was my uncle," said Tom.

"Indeed! Then I am doubly pleased to make your acquaintance. Poor Tom Wyedale! what a witty dog he was, to be sure! Quite one of the best of us. And ah! what a Tory! He would have had Peel hanged for his Corn-law treachery, if he could. Ah! a fine fellow, Tom. He left no children, I think?"

"No, his only son died."

"And Lady Mary?"

"She is very well, thank you."

"And the Abbey?—Wyedale Abbey?—that went to—to—not to you?"

"Alas! no; a brother darkened my life, by getting into the light in front of me."

"Ha, ha! Well, we can't *all* hope to be eldest sons. What?"

"No; my aspirations would have been much more easily satisfied."

"That reminds me of poor Tom. Well, shall we say 'Good night,' or will you come up to our quarters and have a cup of tea, and take a look at these sketches we've been talking about?"

Tom gladly assented, and the old lord led the way to his apartment, explaining that the rooms (which were really the best in the house and entirely charming) were detestable; but that, after to-morrow, he hoped to receive his friends more becomingly. "For"—and here he repeated the formula about the nice little villa, which seemed to have captivated him like the refrain of a pleasant song.

CHAPTER III.

Tom's conduct in the boat was, of course, merely meant to amuse his friend, as the dramatic sequel of their previous conversation, by a representation, as has been said, of the crafty approaches of a politic lover. As far as his friend was concerned, however, the humour of the caprice had missed fire. Cosmo was anything but pleased with it. Punctiliously polite to strangers himself, his temper had been somewhat ruffled by the brusqueness of Lord Germistoune's first greeting; it had been progressively disturbed by Tom's persistent method of dragging him forward in a false light, and by the distinct manner in which Lord Germistoune seemed to ignore his existence. Moreover, this poking of fun at total strangers (one of whom was a lady), all unwitting though they were, appeared to him improper and impertinent; and the poking of fun at himself, except in

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private, was by no means to his taste. From all this it resulted that Cosmo had fallen into a very considerable state of dignity, and would have excused himself stiffly from accepting the invitation to the Germistoune apartment. Miss Douglas, however, divining, with feminine tact, that something was amiss, and attributing it to its true cause, or partly so, seconded the invitation with a simple heartiness that made refusal impossible, and Cosmo followed her.

And now came Tom's retribution. The portfolio of sketches was his Nemesis — a huge portfolio filled to overflowing with indifferent performances, through which he had to wade at solemn pace and slow. For the artist stood by him, and saw that there was no evasion— haranguing upon each "bit," bewildering his victim with strange art-jargon, and keeping him alert by sudden appeals and subtle pauses for notes of admiration. There was no escape for poor Tom, who knew as much about water-colours as a Choctaw Indian, and was wont to confess that he liked to take the beauties of nature "with an object," and with special reference to Epsom, Ascot, and Goodwood. But, with a desperate resignation, he went manfully through to the end of a long hour and a half. Anathemas

rose in his heart, mingled with poignant yearnings for tobacco and cool tankards: but he suppressed them all, and sat yawnless and smiling, and the winner of golden opinions from his host —richly deserved, indeed; for he who can drink to the dregs that "drowsiest syrup of the world" —the prosings of an egotistical dilettante—and, drinking, seem to like it, has fortitude enough to win a martyr's crown. Meantime, and thus, it so fell out that Cosmo was exemplifying the vanity of human wishes. Scarcely two hours before, he had expressed a resolution to avoid contact with Miss Douglas, and now he was involuntarily engaged with her in a *tête-à-tête* of formidable length. The situation might have been decidedly romantic—ought, indeed, so to have been. The coincidence of the picture's resemblance—*there* was a romantic element; and, coupled with it, the virtual saving of the young lady's life—*there* was another. Then, her extreme beauty would have shed a halo over circumstances infinitely more prosaic; and what stage, what *mise-en-scène*, could surpass the Lake of Como, with all its accessories of night, summer, and the moon? But alas! "the *romantic*" visits us only as the angels of the proverb do. Too seldom does it drop on our daily lives;

and though, like some gossamery woof of magic tints, it then draws over every rugged angle the "softening folds of gracious drapery," it remains but for an instant, and vanishes so abruptly that we scarcely wot of the beauty that has been on us and about us, till the glory has departed. It is dissipated by a breath, and by none more surely than the whisper of an incongruous association; and, by some psychological law, those who are most susceptible of a romantic impression have also usually the keenest perceptions of the incongruous. Thus, Tom Wyedale's rollicking conversation in the boat, and his Philistine tone about the young lady herself, had brushed away, for his friend, all romance from the events of the evening. To Cosmo the little drama presented itself in no ethereal aspect. The whole thing had simply irritated him. Sensitive by nature, and somewhat shy, his manner to strangers was marked at best by a certain reserve and stateliness that were scarcely prepossessing; and at present he was angry with Tom, offended with Lord Germistoune, vexed with himself, and almost displeased with Miss Douglas herself—though why, it would have been difficult to say, except, indeed, for bringing him, against his will, into that contact with herself which, per-

haps in scant earnest, he had announced his intention of avoiding. This complication was certainly not likely to subdue his natural characteristics; so that Miss Douglas might have been pardoned if, at first, she had rather repented the warmth of her invitation, and felt that the task of entertaining the guest who fell to her charge was more formidable than pleasant. At first it certainly appeared to be so, for Cosmo seemed to be bereft of all power of conversational initiative, and even in response he was sluggish and frozen. Miss Douglas, as the daughter of Lord Germistoune, a wealthy and well-known peer, was presumably of the London world; Cosmo himself was more or less of the same world,—and that two such people should be together in a *tête-à-tête*, and be in want of topics of conversation, even for a minute, might well seem an unaccountable phenomenon. The mere routine work of each season produces, for a certain class of society, topics enough to supply with the materials of many hours' dialogue, the most brainless he or she who drifts through the regulation amount of duty or pleasure prescribed by the rubric of fashion. The veriest parrot, from the blessed iteration of the same phrases (if not ideas), heard hourly, for three or four

solid months, can scarcely fail to have glibly on the tip of his tongue sufficient small-change of talk to pay his way, without difficulty, among the initiated. And, then, there are always one or two great salient events in the history of each season, which, independently of the smaller gossip, fend off from the talker the necessity of plunging, without a cork-jacket, into the hopeless waters of originality. Let us cast back an eye over the last few seasons; at once it is struck by a dozen things of the sort. For instance, a royal savage—the blacker the better—visits the country, and reduces the nation to a state of infantile imbecility. In his honour there are court entertainments, where he is puzzled; and municipal banquets, where his inner man is compromised; a review at Windsor, where he is again puzzled; an exhibition of ironclads, where he is frightened and again sick. What a fund of topics in all this! What possibilities of earnest question and response! Were *you* there? *Were* you? Had you the *entrée* to the privileged places? Did you see *him?* Is it true that he was sulky and rude? Can it be conceivable that his teeth chattered? Then the Duchess of ——, in giving a fancy ball, supplies another fertile theme. It was beautiful, but she gave it too late or too

early. It clashed with the *festa* of some other potentate. Such a pity! And was royalty *really* offended or not? If so, why?—if not, why not? Then the Prince's garden-party,—if you were at it, it is well; if not, still it is well, for much time can be consumed in giving every reason, but the true one, for your absence. The Academy has a sensation picture, painted by a girl blind from her birth. Here art-talk *à discretion*. She is equal to Salvator Rosa, or Horace Vernet, or Paul Potter, or any other painter—no matter whom—to whom the *vox populi* has taught you to liken her. There is a new reading of Hamlet by a Hindoo, which (in Hindustani) edifies society. Such a mellifluous language Hindustani! So perfect a vehicle for Shakespearian thought! Some curled darling of society cheats at cards or helps himself to his neighbour's wife. Here is breathless interest! Why did he do it? When? How? Where? What *does* Sir John say to it? Will the countess *ever* get over the shock? Moral—how *can* people do such things? Some one else, who ought to have known better, commits some other *faux pas*, scarcely discussible, but which can be sniffed round, with titillating innuendoes and low, confidential, murmurings. Burnand

has a new farce, the scream of which has been loud enough to cross the Channel and be echoed in Paris. Doubtless you have heard it in both languages? Offenbach outdoes himself in a new opera-bouffe — 'Suzanne et les Vieillards.' A little shocking, is it not? but then so bright and clever! That atones for most things. And then comes the "music of the future," and sets the whole queer jumble to appropriate strains. You heard 'Lohengrin'? You *did?* It was a perfect enigma to you—or entirely comprehensible. You sat through the *whole* of that first suffocating night? to the end? and wished for more? No wonder! Or wished yourself dead? How natural!

People who have these and a hundred kindred, and equally welcome topics, freely at command, ought not to be in much danger of having to hazard an original thought, or of having to pause in an unbroken stream of well-worn, but still serviceable platitudes. And then there is in reserve the gossip of "Prince's," "Hurlingham," and Cowes; the ordinary *on dits* about ordinary marriages, scandals, scrapes, flirtations, and what not. So that, altogether, there is surely more than enough, when the season is over, to carry one on from August till April—provided, of course, there is an occasional change in the

scene of one's platitudinising. Cosmo, however, availed himself of none of these resources. He had entered the room, as we have seen with ruffled plumage; but surely his good-breeding could not possibly permit him to sulk in a *tête-à-tête* with a lady who was doing her best to entertain him? No. Well, he was not sulky, but he was sombre; and that, with his natural shyness, had dammed up his ideas. Then, every moment he was with Miss Douglas deepened his impression of her wonderful resemblance to the Sasso-Ferrato Madonna, preoccupying him at first, and then making him feel — fancifully enough, to be sure—that ordinary topics of conversation were unsuitable in the presence of one about whom clung so many suggestions far removed from the *banalité* of common life. Miss Douglas, on her side, bravely struggled with difficulties; but neither did she avail herself of the dreary reserve of London small-talk. She had in truth been but one season—that of her *début*—two years before, in town; so that her resources in that respect could neither have been many nor recent. Had it been otherwise, perhaps Cosmo's tongue would have been earlier untied, because Sasso Ferrato's Madonna would have ceased to embarrass him.

She and her father had been great travellers; for the old lord—being half invalid, half valetudinarian—required perpetual change of scene, and frequent visits to those numerous health-resorts, scattered all over that large portion of Europe which is now included in the map of the invalid. In this way there were few places in Europe of great interest which she had not visited; and a splendid collection of photographs which lay on the table, contained souvenirs of everything beautiful and noteworthy which she had herself seen. Upon this book, as an aid in her difficulty, she fell back; and, since Cosmo had also travelled much, she was able for a time, without seeming to lecture, to carry on a tolerably one-sided conversation.

Her manner was singularly unaffected and simple; and a certain freshness of appreciation made her remarks, on what she had really liked and admired, original and striking. By degrees Cosmo was thoroughly thawed; and catching the infection of an enthusiasm which was by no means foreign to his own nature, he began to exchange experiences and sentiments with her, with an earnestness and volubility which, if they had suddenly broken forth from the iced man of half an hour ago, would have suggested

magical transformation. But he, indeed, must have been of the earth earthy, who could have recalled, in company with a sympathetic spirit, yet without some enthusiasm, the memories which this book awakened. For there was the Parthenon, shattered, despoiled, but peerless still in its beauty, and glorious in its suggestions of a panorama instinct with the genius of the Golden Age. And there were the Pyramids, from which even the tourist cannot hunt the mystery and awe of the early world. The Mount of Olives, where Reverence feels that, in no language, it dare utter its emotions. The Pincian Hill, where History seems to stagger under the burden of its records. The Golden Horn and the Golden Shell. The beautiful illusions of Stamboul, the wondrous realities of Syracuse, the weird resurrections of Pompeii, and the sunny life of Sorrento. From one to the other they passed, and through the quaint portals of many a rare old town of Germany and Holland, and by many a venerable monument of pious art, and up the castled Rhine, through the land of legendary lore, and on into the splendid wilderness of Alp and glacier. People who had beheld such scenes with seeing eyes—who had thought in them, felt in them,

received some of their inspirations, and learned a few of their myriad lessons — and who had before them such aids to memory as this book contained, had assuredly small need to fall back for topics upon the dwarfed and dwarfing life of modern society. The photograph-book proved an entirely successful stratagem of despair, which very soon changed into lively pleasure and interest, so that all sombre clouds were dissipated. But the conversation was by no means all pitched in a transcendental or earnest key. It was constantly relieved by humorous reminiscences, which this or that scene recalled. Esmè proved to be full of fun ; she was as eager and fresh in that respect as in more serious matters, and passed from one phase to the other with a certain quaint *naïveté* which ought to have been wholly captivating to Cosmo, had he not been a little doubtful as to the fitness of such characteristics in one who wore the outward semblance of his idealised Madonna.

The time began to pass quickly—even too quickly.

At last there was but one more photograph to look at.

"There!" she said, as she turned it over, "the last of my photographs, but to me the

most beautiful—at least I am bound to say so; that is my home."

"It is beautiful," replied Cosmo, "and a capital photograph, for I know the place well. I can't be mistaken. It is Dunerlacht Castle?"

"Yes. I think it is very good; even papa is pleased with it. The old part of the house comes out wonderfully; and the shadow on the water is so natural, is it not? And your travels have actually carried you up to our fastnesses?"

"Yes. I had to pass Dunerlacht pretty often a year or two ago. I had a shooting in ——shire, not very far from you—Finmore."

"Oh, we know it very well! Some friends of ours used to have it. It is a charming little place. How lucky you were to have Finmore! How did you like it?"

"I was delighted with it."

"And you like Scotland?"

"Yes; indeed, very much more than most other places."

"Now I am quite sure that your taste is admirable, although I don't the least agree with you about Interlachen or the Giessbach."

"Are *you* as enthusiastic about Scotland as about Switzerland?"

"Oh yes—more so; but it is a different kind

of enthusiasm—just as I might be very enthusiastic about a friend, but still more so about papa, you know."

"Yes—the fatherland, of course, ought to be before all others; and, indeed, I suppose I ought to have the same sort of filial feeling to Scotland."

"What! are *you* a Scotchman?" cried Esmè.

"Perhaps I should rather say of Scotch descent," replied Cosmo, with some embarrassment.

"Oh, your family have deserted the beloved country!—long ago?"

"I—I—really don't quite know—some time—a generation or two, I believe."

Not to know the history and movements of one's ancestors for several hundred years struck Esmè as astonishing in one of gentle blood; but there was something in Cosmo's manner which told her that the subject was unpleasant to him, although he had himself introduced it, and so she abandoned it, merely asking him if he had given up his visits to Scotland as a sportsman.

"No," replied Cosmo, "not in theory, although in practice, since the year before last: but I am half thinking of going back this year; and, indeed, I have been in treaty for another moor—

in a different county, however. But I scarcely think it will suit."

"I hear your friend talking about Scotland," said the old lord, who had by this time come to the end of his art-treasures; "and, by the by, who *is* your friend? His name puzzles me. It is Scotch, and it isn't Scotch. That is, it is the name of a locality, and the title of a dormant Scotch peerage; but there is certainly no *gentleman's* family of that name in the country. Where does this gentleman come from?"

"Well, do you know, it *is* odd, but I can't tell you, except in a very hazy way. Cosmo and I were at Eton and a private tutor's together, and then at Cambridge, and we have been fast friends all our lives; but, as we used to say at school, I don't 'know him at home.'"

"Ah! by the by, there is a Glencairn, the great capitalist and speculator. I know a good deal about him — a rough, vulgar dog; but I believe he is unmarried. You don't know who your friend's father is."

"Well, I know one excellent trait in his father's character — he is immensely rich. I believe he made his fortune in the City; but he retired from business long ago (which is also to his credit), and lives in the wilds somewhere in

the west of England. Glencairn has never asked me there, although I constantly go to his own shooting. I fancy his father is peculiar, —probably mad or something of the sort. He seldom speaks of him, although I know he goes to see him regularly. That's about all I know of his father's family. I knew an uncle of his, though, by the by, a brother of his mother's—a capital fellow—Colonel Wildgrave. As to Glencairn's nationality, I never thought of that, except, of course, I supposed he was an Englishman; but he might have been a Kaffir by extraction, for anything he has ever said to me on the subject. He is rather reserved on some points, although the best fellow in the world, when you know him, and immensely clever. His regiment used to swear by him, and a mess is generally not far wrong about a fellow's character."

"Oh! he was in the army?"

"Yes; he was a Captain in the —— Dragoon Guards."

"He doesn't strike me as exactly one's idea of the 'darling of the mess.'"

"Ah! well, but he was."

"The —— Dragoon Guards, you say?"

"Yes."

"Hum! I think I have heard that that regiment recruits its officers in the City, very much."

"Oh! no. There are some rich fellows in it of that sort; but, City or not City, I don't know a better lot in the service. They used to be, at least, when Cosmo was in them."

"Well, I should have thought he was rather conceited and stiff to be a regimental favourite in a first-class corps. Only my own impression —only my own first impression. You are not in the service?"

"No; I am a retired diplomatist," replied Tom, with a grin.

"Rather an early retreat, is it not?"

"Yes, perhaps: but I wanted a career; and if a fellow wants a career, F.O. is not likely to give it him—either at home or abroad."

"And so you left it?"

"And so I left it."

"And the career?"

"Ah! the career? — well, I begin to think a career is a mistake. I see fellows with careers not half so jolly as I am. There's Gerald St Clair — now, there's an example. That fellow was always talking about it. He had career on the brain, I believe, and he put a lot of that sort

of stuff into my head at Cambridge. 'You must have a horizon,' he used to say. Well, there he is in the House—has been in it for five years—and he has done nothing. On committees all day, and in his place all night, with lots to say, but never allowed to say it. I don't call *that* jolly. His time, he says, hasn't come. He must walk to his career over the dead bodies of a score or two of second-rate prosers, who won't die for thirty years. An obstruction like that prevents one from seeing much horizon. I think Gerald has put his foot in it. That's my idea."

"If every one thought as you do, we should be rather short of Ministers."

"Oh no; you can always get lots of 'middling seconds'—quite good enough for the business nowadays."

"Ha! ha! you take a low view of Ministerial qualifications. Perhaps you don't know that I have been in office myself?"

"Oh! of course I do. Who doesn't? But that was in the good times. Yet even *you* left it, though you had everything before you—something like a career indeed!"

"Health, health," said the old gentleman, greatly delighted; he had once been, for six months, an under-secretary in an asthmatic

coalition Government, which had been born moribund and expired within a year. "Health is a worse obstruction than a phalanx of prosy seniors. But then you had the Church or the bar, fairly unobstructed for a young fellow of talent and interest."

"No, I didn't fancy the bar, and I'm pretty sure the Church would not have fancied me—a case of mutual incompatibility, probably."

"And so," said Lord Germistoune, blending the elements of a yawn with a look of amusement—"and so here you are."

"And so here I am; but I am certain I ought not to be here any longer—it is fearfully late. We are keeping you out of bed most unconscionably."

"Don't mention it—don't mention it. Ah! dear me, it *is* late. Well, I hope you'll come again and help me to kill an hour or two as pleasantly."

"Thanks. Can I be of any use in helping you in your hunt for the villa?"

"Oh! thank you, no; much obliged to you, though—much obliged."

The party then broke up; and Cosmo, at least, left the room with very different feelings from those which he had brought into it, not-

withstanding that his lordship bade him good-night with a stately frigidity, which was amply responded to in kind. The fact was, either that something in Cosmo's air or manner had piqued the old gentleman, who was pleased with little short of a slavish deference, or perhaps he had been seized with one of those unaccountable prejudices by which we are sometimes so unreasonably set against strangers, or—well, he did not love Dr Fell, though the reason why may have been as unexplainable as that in the proverb.

Cosmo's wrath against his friend had evaporated. "I daresay you were bored, Tom," he said, as they were separating for the night. "The noble lord was not too lively, I can imagine."

"Oh yes, I was bored, of course; but I rather like the old fellow; and I improved the shining hour, I think. I always cotton to swells, you know, because swells generally have shooting; and, by the by, I made quite a little programme for us both, while he was bragging about his confounded daubs. It was this: You to close with the Finmore shooting, and I to shoot with you there from the 12th to — say the 28th — as long as dogs are practicable, in fact; and then

go on to Dunerlacht after the black game begins, and the driving. What say you?"

"Very jolly for you."

"How cold you are! Now a good fellow would have added 'rapture for myself and luck for Lord Germistoune.' Your manners are far from nice, Cosmo. By the by, how do you like the Madonna?"

"I think Miss Douglas is extremely agreeable."

"Indeed!—and 'the contact'? was it not too intolerable?"

"What contact?"

"Oh! you've forgotten our little dialogue in the boat. Well, well, never mind. By the by, I withdraw from my position as swain and suitor. Her hands are too large."

"I didn't observe it."

"I did, though; I shouldn't know what to do with them. I'm going to stick to her parent instead. I know there ought to be a tremendous show of birds this year at Dunerlacht. They had a jubilee last year, and Snowie tells me there's not a scrap of disease in the district. Good-night, Cosmo. I suppose we may consider Finmore a fixture?"

"I don't know."

"Come now, captain, make it a fixture, and I'll stay with you till the 31st. I can't say fairer than that."

"It certainly is most liberal."

"And I'll even return for a week or two at the finish, if I can manage it."

"Provided no better billet offers itself."

"Well, hang it! I'm only a mortal after all. Come, now, 'parole Dunerlacht,' as you bloodthirsty mercenaries say in the army; bring the parable home and add, 'countersign Finmore—pass Thomas Wyedale, and all's well.' Come now, out with it."

"I never talked shop, even when I was in the service."

"An excellent rule; but the necessary exception would sound well in this echoing corridor. Now, then, in a deep, soul-stirring baritone, 'countersign Fin——'"

"Parole 'Slumber,' countersign 'Bed,'" said Cosmo, entering his room, and shutting the door.

"Diplomacy retires before the brutalities of War," shouted Tom, going on his way.

"Will Diplomacy have a liquor before he turns in?" said Mr Cass, the American hero of the *table d'hôte*, looking out of his door.

"Sir," said Tom, "between 'diplomacy' and

'dipsomania,' the English language marks a distinction which is probably not preserved in the American dialect. Nevertheless, what is the creature?"

"Bourbon whisky. Drinks short. Clears the eye."

"That's conclusive. I'm on. We can only die once," said Tom.

Echoes of his laughter, long and loud, came, for an hour and more, from Mr Cass's room, and reached Cosmo, who, turning angrily on his pillow, muttered, "Confound the fellow! he's got hold of some one else now. I believe he'd rather sit up all night with a Trappist than go to bed at a reasonable hour." And, indeed, Tom would have found talk and laughter enough to supply the deficiencies of twenty Trappists, for a thousand and one nights, if necessary.

CHAPTER IV.

THERE are three influences which generally carry their point in this sinful world—violence, obstinacy, and money. Men, as a rule, hate a row, and either knuckle under to violence or get quietly out of its way. Obstinacy wears out the resistance of indifference and laziness, which, in nineteen cases out of twenty, are its only opponents; and as for money, the consciences of all intelligent readers tell them what *it* can do, so that the author need not commit himself to a misanthropical axiom.

Lord Germistoune, enjoying the advantage of all these forces in combination, generally contrived, as he said, to get his own way; and, in this wrathful freak about the villa, he was successful. The hotel authorities, warned by the courier of his master's indignant resolve, tendered every sort of salve, in the way of excuse and apology, which Italian amiability, sharpened

by self-interest, could devise; but in vain. Violence gave way, indeed; but obstinacy stepped into the breach.

"I never," said Lord Germistoune to the excellent and most courteous manager—"I never go back from my word. All you say may be true, and indeed your tone is proper—very proper; but I have made up my mind. You may go."

Then the courier was despatched post-haste to "find a villa." Under ordinary circumstances, to find a villa ready, then and there, and available for so short a term, would have been out of the question and not to be dreamed of. But Lord Germistoune being violent, obstinate, and rich, the necessary dwelling was at once procured. The favourite maid of an Italian *marchesa* who was occupying the Villa Bianca for the season, had been accidentally drowned in the lake two nights before, and her mistress had received such a shock from the occurrence that she was anxious to leave the place at once. And thus, by paying her a double rent, and taking over the establishment as it stood, on condition of *instant* possession, the noble lord was able, literally, to carry his point. His new landlady went to the hotel for the night; and he, sending his courier in the forenoon to order

dinner, took his daughter over in the evening, in time to avoid the *origo mali*—the *table d'hôte*.

"It is too large," he said, "and the rent is distinctly monstrous; but it will be a lesson to them. The money is well spent."

And perhaps it was. "What!" you cry, "in such sinful extravagance? in such a shameful indulgence of temper?" Yes; but the money went to the marchioness, who may have been an angel of charity, who may have fed the hungry and clothed the naked with the *lire* of the angry man, and who at least took from bloated England a crumb or two for starveling Italy. There is an unction, drawn from philanthropy and political economy, which the angry pauper may lay to his soul when he is glaring with fiery eyes at the profligate extravagance of the rich—and it is this, that, in the vast majority of cases, the rich man, by his self-indulgent frailties, even though he fool it to the top of his bent, does infinitely more good than harm to the world at large. He may damage himself, to be sure; but what of that? He is in an infinitesimal minority. The greatest good of the greatest number is what we have to consider.

If the indulgence of bad temper be criminal,

the beauty of the Villa Bianca involved a certain miscarriage of political justice. A little below Cadenabbia, the lowest spur of a thickly-wooded hill, projects a promontory into the lake; and on the centre of this the villa stood, somewhat higher than all its neighbours, and with a clear prospect up, down, and across the water. A pleasant confusion of garden and grove and shrubbery clothed the little peninsula with luxuriant wealth of flowers and foliage, and made the air about the house rich with the perfumes of rose and violet, of citron, jessamine, magnolia, and myrtle. Much taste and ingenuity had been displayed in laying out, adorning, and giving variety to this little territory. A labyrinthine path traversed it in all directions, and wound up with a gentle ascent to the summit of the hill behind. There, there was a circular summer-house, open all round, and commanding views in every direction. Besides this, divers tributary paths led to a variety of well-chosen points of view, where the prospect might be enjoyed in shady solitudes. Esmè was enchanted with her new abode; and the favour with which her father first regarded it, as a kind of moral beacon for refractory hotel-keepers, was soon confirmed by its own charms.

They began, at once, to live in the open air; and, small though their domain was, it contained so much variety in itself, and enjoyed so unlimited a command of the scenery round about, that they seldom went beyond their own boundaries till evening, when, if the coolness of the air tempted them out on the lake, they were rowed about in a pretty boat, manned by rowers in a picturesque costume, which belonged to the establishment. Esmè, who had a keen eye for all kinds of beauty, and who was very susceptible of impressions from external nature, was never tired of wandering from point to point of the pleasaunce and the hill. To her it was a fairy-land, through which she moved amidst constant transformations, finding in every mood a congenial resting-place, and even being able, as she said, to alter her mood at will by a change of scene that could be effected in a few seconds.

"If I wish to be 'sublime,'" she wrote to a friend, in describing the place, "I have only to climb to the top of our 'Muses Hill,' and gaze at the splendid mountains of the Engadine, far away, and watch the shifting lights on the eternal snow, and the weird effects of the whirling mists and vapours that hang about the boundary line between the heat of Italy and the

cold of the Alps and the glaciers; or if I desire to be gently poetical, I look down upon the sunny lake; or if a dark spirit possesses me, we have a grotto, all overshadowed by a gigantic ilex, where the world may be comfortably forgotten. If I wish to sketch, there is a subject everywhere ready to my hand, and I have only to sit down and begin. In our Helicon we have natural music always, for a most harmonious little spring bubbles out near the top, and goes singing down among the silent trees, and through the gardens, and into the lake. As for poetry, we have it here at first-hand. We see it and breathe it; there is no need of books."

Her father, without taking such a transcendental view of the place, was thoroughly contented with it. Nothing jarred on his irritable nerves. He worked away in the open air with his pencil and brush, read his papers *al fresco*, and composed weighty contributions to the literature of a "ganging plea," which still seems to constitute, in some Scottish families, a necessary condition of landed state and dignity.

Two days after his establishment in the villa, he paid a formal visit to the two friends at their hotel. They had met on the lake, and had a few minutes' conversation, on each of the previ-

ous evenings; and on this, as on all other occasions, his manner was especially cordial to Tom Wyedale, whose jovial humour had taken his fancy, none the less that its joviality was tempered with a careful deference to his opinions and prejudices. His manner to Cosmo, on the other hand, was markedly cool, stiff, and distant. He seemed to have a difficulty in realising the fact that Cosmo existed and was present. He had certainly taken a violent dislike to the young man; to all which Cosmo, not slow to observe and swift to resent it, responded with an equal *hauteur* and reserve. Nevertheless, he accompanied Tom on the return visit the following day. They found Lord Germistoune sitting in the open air. He had just finished his correspondence for the day, and his letters lay on the table before him, sealed and ready for despatch. Esmè was with him, but just about to start with her drawing materials for the top of the hill; and on the friends begging that their visit might not detain her, she suggested that the whole party might transfer themselves to the summit, where she could promise a magnificent view; "and," she added, "I shall send you all away when I am going to begin my work."

Lord Germistoune and Tom having mutually

button-holed each other, Esmè again fell to the lot of Cosmo, and she led the way with him.

"We are very proud of our realms," she said, "and I am going to take you all through them before we begin the ascent. Prepare yourself to be surprised and delighted."

Their pride was thoroughly justifiable. Cosmo was much struck by the ingenuity with which the labyrinthine path had been contrived; for, turning and winding, backwards and forwards, here, there, and everywhere, it led them past an astonishing variety of features, and gave the wanderer the impression that he was traversing a most spacious and variegated domain, though the whole was probably included within two hundred square yards. Here they came upon a grotto; there upon a fountain. Now they plunged into a bosky dell, all gloom and tangle; or passed under bright arcades, where the sunbeams glanced through leaves of the vine and the passion-flower. Now they emerged on the emerald sward of a miniature glade, or were met by gorgeous flashes of colour from exquisite parterres. Everywhere marble fauns and nymphs peered forth from bowery ambushes of bay and acacia, taking a semblance of life and movement from the quivering streamlet that washed their

feet, and from the boughs and leaves that cast down upon them the shimmer of green-gold shadows. At the upper end, a pretty group of Nereids received a tiny cascade in a glittering shell, and let it escape, a meandering rivulet, to water the whole pleasaunce. At the other extremity, the daughters of Danaus caught it again in a bottomless *amphora*, and gave it to the lake in its original form. All around, the descent to the water was steep and craggy; but flowers nestled among the rocks, creepers festooned the ledges, willows drooped their tremulous sprays over them. Whatever was harsh or rugged wore a brave mantle of bloom and greenery, and none but fair images fell upon the dreamy lake. At last it was all explored, and they began the ascent.

"Well," said Cosmo, "you are indeed to be congratulated. The contriver of all this must have been a genius. Of his one talent he has made at least ten, and he has done it all with such perfect taste. We have seen much in the small space, but there is no jumble or crowding. One little *morceau* of scenery seems to lead naturally to the next."

"It must have been a delightful amusement laying it out," said Esmè.

"Yes; I think there can be nothing more fascinating than landscape-gardening."

"Oh, that must be delightful! like painting, with trees, and lakes, and rivers, and meadows for one's materials."

"And then the contriver of these grounds had, besides all the difficulties and charms of the art, the triumph of concocting a sort of Chinese puzzle; a subtle delight for a mathematical mind, I suppose."

"You will see that he had quite as true an eye for grand scenery; all the points of view on the hill are perfectly chosen."

"There he excels his Italian ancestors. I was thinking, down in the garden, that it might all have existed in the old Roman days. Horace would have delighted in just such a place. One can imagine him reclining on that beautiful bit of turf beside the cascade, passing the flask of Chian wine to a circle of companions, pouring a libation to Bacchus, and making the company laugh with quaint conceits about the Nereids and all the mythological statuary."

"But then he would have changed his mood up here. Look at that glimpse, through the trees, of the high peak—the Bernina, I think it is."

"Magnificent! but Horace would simply have

wrapped his toga round him, shivered, and proposed an immediate return to the 'Chian.' He would certainly have changed his mood, but it would not have been for one of fine frenzy."

"And yet he was the most popular poet of his time, was he not?"

"Certainly—the most popular; but if he had gone into ecstasies over sublime scenery, he would not have been so; men would not have understood him. A poet sings with the voice of his age, or he does not sing to *it* at all."

"Well, but they were immensely cultivated and civilised in those days."

"Yes, they were, of course; but their culture did not develop the love of natural scenery to any great extent. They liked pretty scenery certainly, but they looked upon the Alps with horror, and the magnificence of a stormy sea was only a thing to be shuddered at. After all, this real love of scenery is quite modern."

"Then, has all this beautiful world been wasted for thousands of years upon eyes that might as well have been blind?"

"'Wasted' is a strong word. Its beauty and grandeur may have produced all sorts of other valuable effects upon men's minds before it woke up what may almost be called a new passion."

"How *did* it come at last?"

"Ah, I am afraid that is getting rather beyond my depth. But I suppose, for one thing, it would begin to grow steadily as people began to travel."

"One does often notice that people who remain always in one place, even though it be beautiful, take its beauties as a matter of course, and don't seem to observe them or to be aware of them."

"But, as they begin to move from place to place, they naturally begin to compare one scene with another. The habit of comparison increases the habit of observation, and produces the idea of excellence. Art takes hold of this idea, develops it, paints it, teaches men to think of it, helps them to compose from their own experiences an ideal standard. By degrees, poetry recognises the fitness of surrounding romantic action with picturesque scenery, and suggests the sympathy of external nature with men's emotions. This is almost altogether modern. The ancients have, indeed, beautiful flashes of it; but they are few and far between. One of the most perfect gems of modern poetry is Tennyson's 'Œnone.' You know it, of course. The same story is beautifully told by an old Latin poet. But compare the ancient with the modern,

and it appears cold, sunless, and dead. The ancient relies upon the human *pathos* almost exclusively; the modern poet draws within the circle of his drama, as a most sympathetic audience, and almost as active participants, everything in external nature that made the Idalian glen beautiful and impressive. The deep, solemn pine-wood—the light of the 'solitary' morning touching the far-away snow-peaks—the bewildered cloud seeking its lost way among the tree-tops—the silence, the shadows, the distant murmur of the cascade,—all in perfect harmony with the sorrow that is wringing Œnone's heart. And then the burst of life and joy when Aphroditè appears—the upspringing of the violet and the crocus, the lotus, the lily, the amaracus, the asphodel, to do her honour;

> 'And a wind uprose,
> And overhead, the wandering ivy and vine,
> This way and that, in many a wild festoon
> Ran riot, garlanding the gnarled boughs,
> With bunch, and berry, and flower, thro' and thro'.'

Even history at last begins to chronicle events with an eye to the scenery in which they are enacted, and delights to point to harmonies and discords between the former and the latter. Look at Macaulay, Froude, and Kinglake, and

then turn to Hume and Smollett. And——" but here Cosmo broke off with a laugh, and said, "A thousand apologies, Miss Douglas, for prosing and lecturing to you, and for what is perhaps, after all, mere solemn nonsense. What I mean to say is, simply, that when this educational system has once been set in motion by the arts, or what not, every sort of other influence co-operates, and helps to clear our perceptions of that to which the old world was nearly blind."

"You spoke," said Esmè, after a pause, "of 'a poet singing with the voice of his age;' and I remember now that there is nothing worth speaking of, in the way of landscape, among the early painters. It had never occurred to me before that the love of scenery was a modern invention, and I don't think I had thought about the blank in early art. Now I understand the reason."

"Ah! an analogy. Well, I suppose the artist ought to give expression, in every age, to that with which the more ideal side of human nature is mainly occupied in his time. It was the aspiration of the ancient Greeks to reach, by moral and physical discipline, an ideal standard of beauty in the human form. How splendidly this is expressed in their sculpture! In the dark ages, art, in any true sense, all but slumbered,

because in the dark ages its occupation was all but gone. Then, at the revival of art, we find religion altogether the predominant subject. The painters, to be sure, were generally, if not monks, under monkish influence; but, in fact, religion was in these days almost the only outlet which men had from their lower nature. As the outlets were multiplied, the field of art was extended. You couldn't have a better proof of this than by going direct from the Florentine galleries to the annual exhibition of the 'Salon' in Paris, or of Burlington House in London. Outlets there, with a vengeance. No one artist, nowadays, could represent his age as one of the great old masters represented his; he would require to have a thousand minds. Forgive all these truisms."

"But they are not truisms to me. Though I have seen many of the best pictures in the world, I am afraid I have not thought about them—beyond, of course, immensely admiring what appeared to me to be beautiful."

"And I am sure you could not meet with any one less competent than I am to hold forth on the philosophy of art. I know nothing, except that I know nothing."

"Oh, but you have both seen and thought;

and that at least gives you knowledge enough for yourself — enough to make you enjoy art thoroughly."

"But not enough to entitle me to lecture you as I have been doing. Now, tell me which of all the pictures you have seen is your favourite?"

"What a formidable question! If I knew anything about painting, I might be able to say which, in my opinion—*my* opinion! how grand that sounds!—is the most admirable as a painting. But I know nothing of technicalities. I only know the pictures that please me, and impress me, and touch me the most; and there are so many that seem to do all these things the *most*. No, I could never say which was my greatest favourite; I have so many. Every mood has its greatest favourite; and each mood is *me*, I suppose, for the time being. So I can have no one *constant*, greatest favourite. That sounds dreadfully fickle, does it not?"

"Not at all. If we had no change of moods, life would be monotonous indeed; and if in each mood you felt the same appreciation of the same picture, it might only show that you were not really touched by it at all. A connoisseur, of course, can have a constant favourite, because his judgment as to the me-

chanical part of the work will not vary; but when it comes to be a question of sentiment, everything is changed."

"There is one painter, by the by," said Esmè, "though not one painting, whom I sometimes fancy I prefer, on the whole, to all the others. Of course, you will think me a barbarian; for he is, I suppose, what you would call a painter of the darker age: but I must be honest—I mean Perugino."

"Perugino?"

"Yes; you are horrified, are you? Well, I like him for one quality, and that is the beautiful, pure, innocent expression which he gives to all his figures. That, of course, would not make him a *great* painter, but it makes all his works lovable. I don't think he could paint a bad man. It does one good to look at the faces he has painted. I don't think they are often to be seen in the real world, although they are real men and women. But there they are, always in his pictures, saints and angels, and holy men and women, such as they should be. There is a St John in the 'Belle Arti' museum at Florence which makes one think of man as he may have been before the Fall. One must delight in goodness and innocence in every

mood, and so I am always delighted with Perugino."

"You prefer him to his immortal disciple?—to Raphael?"

"Well—no; I won't answer that question. Of course, even *I* know how much the disciple excels the master in many things, and in none more than in the power of painting varieties of expression. Raphael can paint every human emotion. Perugino is always expressing the same, but it is one that delights me more than any other."

"Of course, then, you have the same feeling for Fra Angelico?"

"Oh, I don't know. Yes, I have; but not nearly to the same extent. I think his holy faces are the faces of holy people who have never had any temptation. Perugino's are quite as holy; and I think one has more sympathy with them, because they are the faces of people who have thought, and struggled, and suffered—who have come out from many trials and temptations, saddened but purified and pure. Do you not like them? I hope you do."

"Indeed I do. I have always been a great admirer both of Perugino and Fra Angelico, and for *your* reason; but the distinction which you

draw between them never occurred to me. It is excellent. I shall remember it when I am among pictures again : and, really, it is natural ; for Angelico lived his holy life in the convent, and Perugino lived *his* life in the world."

" Yes, Angelico's saints are certainly convent-bred saints. Perugino's have had sad experiences in the outer world."

" I see you *have* thought about pictures, notwithstanding your humble disclaimer."

" No, I don't know how to think ; do you believe that any woman does ? "

" If I had ever doubted it, you would have satisfied me that my doubt was groundless."

" Oh, Mr Glencairn, you must not laugh at me ! I can only think, and then only in a very dim way, when I am talking. One's silent thoughts are so vague and shifting."

" The complaint is fully as much male as female, you may be sure. I suspect that the thoughts of most men are seldom quite completed till they are being expressed in some shape or other. But the remedy is simple, is it not ? "

" What is it ? Oh, I see !—to talk."

" Is that not simple? or do you repudiate all the brutal proverbs about the fair sex on that score ? "

"Of course I repudiate them, as in duty bound. But I am not really qualified to be a champion of my sex. I know so little of it: papa and I have been such wanderers since I was grown up, and we have so few neighbours in Scotland. Then papa's health has prevented us, almost entirely, from having visitors at home, so that my acquaintances are very limited indeed. I have a great many dear friends by hereditary right; but they are really strangers to me, and shadows, more or less. Have you a great many friends?"

"A great many acquaintances, certainly; but the friends are, like yours perhaps, rather shadowy. But you have been in London some seasons, have you not?"

"Only one—the year I was presented; and that was such a whirl! People were very kind to me; but one does not get to know people in that kind of life: do you think so?"

"Men's lives are so different, but there is certainly little time for any one thing."

"No, there is no time to make friends. I possess one real female friend in the world—the funniest, quaintest, cleverest, kindest, best creature—my old governess, my beloved Fraülein. I don't think she is in the least like any one

else ; and if I were to form my ideas of women from her—the *only* one I know really—and act on my ideas, I suspect I should pass my life in a comedy of errors. A whole world full of Fraüleins ! It would be a very nice world, to be sure, and a very good one, but too funny."

" Did you enjoy your season ? "

" Some of it, very much ; but there was too much of the same thing every day."

" I should have thought you would have found variety enough in London."

" Oh ! one certainly did a great many different things every day; but every day was very like yesterday, and I was always tired. Papa thought I was not enjoying myself if I was not *always* doing something, and my *chaperon* was full of energy, and I could get no holidays. I wonder, now, what you would say —is quiet monotony or bustling monotony the more disagreeable ? "

Cosmo laughed, and said, " Miss Douglas, I am getting quite afraid of you—you are so philosophical ! "

" Oh, please don't think me ' strong-minded ' ! —it is only a little question I was constantly asking myself during that season. And oh ! I must tell you, one night it got me into a dread-

ful scrape. I was dancing with a very pleasant partner—exactly like every other partner I had danced with every night for a month—and he was making himself very agreeable, exactly as they all had done, with the same ideas, and almost the same words, as they all had used; and I was tired, and I became a little absent, as one does when one is tired, and this unlucky problem came into my head. Well, I mixed it up with what my partner was saying, and when he asked me, 'Which will you say?'—meaning which of two dances he knew I was disengaged for—I answered, 'I think, for the less of two evils, I would like to choose quiet monotony.' Then he was really very angry, and said, 'The quadrille, I suppose you mean;' and the more I tried to explain, the less he seemed to understand, and became silent and sulky; and he didn't come for the dance. Was it not dreadful?"

"The loss of the dance was so serious?" laughed Cosmo.

"No, of course not; but his feelings were so much hurt—and he was really kind, and trying to amuse me. *That* was serious."

"Oh, Miss Douglas, I could tell now, that you had not been many seasons in London."

"From my want of manners?" asked Esmè, simply.

"No, no; from thinking so much of the gentleman's feeling."

"Do you think a few seasons in London would make me careless about people's feelings? I don't think I should care to go to London again if that were to be the result."

The words were simple enough, and spoken without any *arrière-pensée;* but sometimes the simplest words, illustrated by a tone or a glance, offer a magical revelation of character to a sympathetic nature, and ever thereafter the voice that spoke them has a different sound. Even so was it now. "The Madonna!" said Cosmo to himself—and then aloud, after a long pause, "No, Miss Douglas, I am perfectly certain that no number of London seasons would produce that effect upon *you.*"

Esmè changed colour a little and looked at him inquiringly; but his eyes were cast down, and she said nothing: and though she wondered how he could answer for her with so much confidence, she never for a moment suspected that he was using words of idle compliment. Here was an instance of the sudden, and, so to speak, unconscious but mutual insight of nature into

nature, upon which one might expand psychologically; but fear not, watchful reader!

While the dialogue just recorded was in progress, the speakers had pursued the path in all its windings, stopping mechanically here and there, where a terrace and an artificial opening in the woods invited the passer-by to pause and admire. They had left all these, however, without comment, engrossed in other topics; and, as the last words were spoken, they reached the summit.

It would be difficult to conceive a more varied or beautiful prospect than that which here met them; and they enjoyed it, for a time, in silence. A scene of immense variety indeed, full of contrasts, with every feature of marked individuality, each full of individual suggestiveness, but associated by a series of delicately-graduted tones of light and colour which bound the complex whole together in a sort of ethereal federation. Thus the distant Alp was brought into communion with the vine-clad slopes, the bowery gardens and waving woods, and the grand expanse of the blue lake, with its images and shadows, and flying gleams from snowy sails and fluttering pennons. It was not a scene the beauties of which could be catalogued glibly off, as Milton's

"Allegro" catalogues the items of *his* panorama. The delight of it would have exhaled in minute examination. The mind would have become wearied and paralysed under so many and such various calls on its exertion. The *coup d'œil* was sufficient. It was one which words could never do justice to. This was one of the occasions when "silence is golden." Esmè, without speaking, merely turned on her companion a look of confidence in his appreciation, and then both were silent for some time. At last Cosmo said—

"Have you seen it by moonlight?"

"Yes," replied Esmè, "but it is a complete transfiguration. Nothing could be so changed by the absence of the sun. The colour is the life of it. It is only a spectre by moonlight—beautiful, but with all its glory gone. It almost saddens one."

"I should like to see it."

"Oh, pray come and see it! I should like to hear what you think of it.

"But the moon becomes late of showing herself—too late to allow me to invade the villa."

"But, if you wish, we can have the gate left open for you, and you know your way up here now."

"Thanks," said Cosmo; "it is very good of you:" but perhaps he felt that he would rather contemplate the beautiful spectre in some other company than his own or Tom Wyedale's. This must have been his thought, otherwise his next sentence would have had no reasonable connection with the last—for, "At any rate," he said, after a pause, "I consider myself very fortunate to have made acquaintance with this splendid view, by daylight, and in your company.

"I consider that very flattering, Mr Glencairn; because, in nine cases out of ten, one would rather be alone in looking at fine scenery. In nine cases out of ten, people either talk too much, or they say something jarring, or they are cold and indifferent."

"That is true; but it does not make what I say *flattering*. In all respects, this is one of the *tenth* cases."

Esmè looked at him quickly. Even in her short experience, she had had, no doubt, many gallant speeches made to her; but the judicial gravity of this method of making her pleased with herself, was new, forcible, and gratifying. She laughed gaily, however, and said—

"Well, Mr Glencairn, I feel as if I had talked a great deal too much; but you must blame

yourself—you know it was your own prescription."

"To follow your metaphor, yours was one of the cases where the physician is called in, and finds the patient to be merely a *malade imaginaire*, but is forced to prescribe something to humour him.

"Oh, now you really are flattering me!" cried Esmè; "but, not to let you monopolise all the fine speeches, let me say that invalids sometimes find the doctor's visits more beneficial from his conversation than his prescriptions. But that, by the by, is not paying you in kind; for what I say *is* true—for once you have really made me think."

"Who speaks of *malades imaginaires?*" here broke in the voice of Lord Germistoune, who, having once been thus described by a brusque London doctor, was jealous of the phrase.

"It was only in a parable that such a person was mentioned," said Esmè.

"Ah! in a parable? the only proper place for him. No such person really exists. There's any quantity of imaginary health in the world, but no one needs to imagine himself sick. Every one *is* sick, more or less." Then, turning to Tom, he went on—

"As I was saying, these Lowland farmers are the most confounded fellows in Europe. I'll tell you what they are; they're Communists—that's what they are. The last time I was at Ferniehall—my place in the Lowlands—two of these pirates came to me 'to remonstrate,' as they said, about the state of the game.

"'I presume you mean rabbits?' I said.

"'Rabbits, hares, and winged game too, particularly wood-pigeons,' they answered.

"'Well,' I said, 'why don't you add crows, magpies, and sparrows, and slugs, and snails, and everything that eats anything on a farm? But what *do* you want?'

"They said that their crops were being eaten, and they wanted the game to be killed down to a reasonable limit. I told them that the game *was* within a fair limit, and not more than enough for the sport which I had a right to expect for myself and my friends, on my estate, which, I begged to remind them, was my own.

"'But our crops are being eaten,' they said.

"'And so they ought to be,' I replied, 'in a fair proportion.'

"'Game,' I then explained to them, 'is placed on a property by Divine Providence—just as

wind blows on it, sun shines on it, rain and hail fall upon it, by the decree of Providence. The crops suffer a little from all these things, by the decree of Providence—and, by the same decree, the game eats the crops in a fair proportion. Great heavens!' I said, 'are you going to fly in the face of Providence?'

"They declined to fall in with this view of the matter, and I then remarked—

"'When you became farmers you knew what you had to expect; when you signed your leases you knew all these things; and what the devil do you mean by trying to squeeze me for more than your covenant gives you?'

"'We want justice,' they said.

"'No,' I replied, 'you want injustice—injustice for me;' and then I gave it them hot.

"'I'll tell you what it is,' I said; 'if you think I'm going to be harried and bothered by a lot of malcontents, you're mistaken. I'll make you an offer; it is a good deal more than just—it is foolishly generous. I'll cancel your leases, if you like, and all the leases on the estate, and turn it all into a game-preserve. There! I believe there is a good market for game, and I daresay I should not lose much by the transaction. But I'm indifferent to that. One thing

is certain, I am not going to be the servant of my own tenants, cost me what my freedom may.'

"Then I bowed them out, and told them to send their decision to the factor."

"Admirable!" cried Tom; "that is the way to deal with them. What did they do?"

"Do? stuck to their farms, of course. One of them made £70,000 out of my land in thirty years; I know that for a certainty: and he was only paying me a rent of £600. And what did this fellow do? started against *my* man as candidate for *my* boroughs—on the game-laws 'platform,' of course. Fortunately I was able to take advantage of a technical flaw in the lease, and send him to the right-about."

"Ha, ha, ha!—bravo! I daresay there was a considerable fuss about that."

"I believe there was; but I never read the Radical papers, so it didn't even reach me. In any case, the anger of pickpockets against a man for looking after his own watch and purse is not likely to affect him much. The Lowland tenant-farmer is the most confounded fellow in Europe. There is no one so greedy and selfish."

"I believe," said Cosmo, "that the great irritation of the farmers about game is owing

not altogether, nor perhaps even so much, to over-preservation, as to the fact that the game is very generally sold; and another thing they dislike is, that it isn't even shot by the gentlemen of the neighbourhood. The farmers, of course, have some sort of neighbourly feeling for them, which they can't possibly have for the strangers who are invited to the *battues* simply because they are crack shots, able to swell the grand total of the bag. All this looks to the farmer like a mere mercantile transaction. I confess I am not surprised at it. What they wouldn't grudge to the landlord for his own and his neighbour's amusement, they do grudge when it appears to be simply another rent to be taken off the land at the expense of the rents which they have to find."

"You defend them?" cried Lord Germistoune, with a rising crest.

"Not entirely, by any means; but I can quite understand their point of view, and to some extent sympathise with it."

Cosmo was resolved to be calm, firm, and judicial, though greatly irritated by the domineering tone of the noble lord, and smarting under previous impertinences.

"Then, pray, sir," said Lord Germistoune,

"may I ask, has a man, or has he not, the right to do with his own as he pleases?"

"Unquestionably, so long as it *is* his own exclusively; but it seems to me he limits his rights of proprietorship when he admits another by contract, and for a consideration, to share in the proceeds of his property: by so much he lessens his right to do as he pleases with what is *then*, only *nominally*, his own property."

"This is rank communism!"

"Excuse me, my lord," said Cosmo, angry, but with a laugh, "I entirely decline to plead guilty to that. 'Communism' is a word that at present is very lightly used, and very loosely. But as to the game question, after all, the grievance is, as I say, very much a sentimental one, which the tact and good feeling of the landlords would easily allay."

"By giving up all their rights?"

"By no means; simply by exercising them with fairness and discretion."

"I see, sir, that you are one of the 'new lights.' When you have an estate of your own, you will find your theories change marvellously."

"I don't pretend to any elaborate theories; any acquaintance I have with the question is a practical one. As a game-tenant myself, I

have come a good deal into contact with agricultural tenants, and have never had the slightest difficulty with them."

"Ah, that is beside the question altogether. I decline to consider sophisms. I distinctly beg to be excused from argument with a sophist. The Lowland tenant-farmer is the most confounded fellow in Europe. If you want to find Belleville and Montmartre done into Scotch, go to Forfarshire, and Aberdeenshire, and the Lothians, and you will find them." Saying this, he glared at Cosmo with a *sic volo, sic jubeo* air, as though he were one of the agriculturists in question, cast out of court and in outer darkness for the future.

"Poor Cosmo!" said Tom, as though his friend's logical annihilation were complete, "you'll never make much of politics. You had better stick to your moonlight, and music, and pictures, and leave politics to practical men like Lord Germistoune, or even my humble self."

"A nice business you'd make of them!—I mean you, of course, Tom," said Cosmo; "but this is *not* a political question. It is extremely mischievous and wrong to try to make it one."

"I think," said his lordship, loftily, "we have quite exhausted the subject."

"If it is not politics, it is quite as unpleasant," laughed Esmè; "and therefore I am glad it is exhausted. Papa, Mr Glencairn has given me so many new ideas!"

"They appear to be his *forte*," growled her father.

"Oh, but not stupid, prosy ideas about game, and farmers, and rents; but about art, and pictures, and the spirit of the age—what you never *will* answer my questions about, or talk about."

"I don't want you to be a 'new light,' my dear. I had rather not see you lecturing on a platform. Pray confine yourself to your own subjects. What?"

"But, papa, what *are* my own subjects?"

"There, there! don't tease," snapped her father, with a pettish little stamp of his foot.

Esmè gave a comic look of terror, and presently crossing over to Cosmo said, "There is a view to the back you ought to see. Shall we go?" and they began to move.

"Where are you going?" cried Lord Germistoune, sharply.

"Only to the other side of the plateau, papa, to look at the inland view."

"I wish you to go down with me now, at

once, Esmè. There is something I wish to have copied," and he turned in the direction of the villa. His lordship's temper was evidently broken, and his company manners all but evaporated ; and so the descent was made in haste, and almost in silence. Even Tom Wyedale's rattling power of talk was not exercised. Tom felt by instinct that it was not his hour. Cool adieux on the part of his lordship, even to Tom ; more than cool—stiff and grim—to Cosmo. A laughing whisper from Esmè to the latter, "Shall we have the gate left open ? Will you visit 'the spectre' to-night ?" A gay reply from Cosmo that it would "hardly be safe, in the present state of the game-laws and the penalties against night-poaching ;" and so the visit ended.

"What were you saying to that puppy, Esmè?" snarled Lord Germistoune, when the friends had gone.

"What puppy, dear papa ?" asked Esmè, with demure innocence.

"You know who I mean ; that priggish fellow with the theatrical name—Glencairn."

"Oh, Mr Glencairn ! I could never have recognised him under all these wonderful epithets."

"You're a little imbecile. I hate giggling.

You distinctly giggled with him just now. I abominate giggling. Get ink."

"You're ruining all my plans for the autumn, Cosmo," said Tom as they strolled homewards.

"What do you mean, Tom?"

"Mean? I mean that you're getting that old man's back up mountains high; and he's just the sort of fellow to visit your sins upon your associate. You'll cut me out of my Dunerlacht shooting, to a moral certainty. Why do you beard him? Why do you run against his hobbies?"

Do you suppose *I* am going to cry 'Amen' to every pompous old autocrat who chooses to talk nonsense to me? I wouldn't do it to get all the shooting in Scotland for myself; and I'm not likely to do it merely to let your 'programme,' as you call it, fulfil itself."

"It's deuced selfish of you, then. There is no place in Scotland where you can make so mixed a bag, or so big a one, as Dunerlacht—*that* I am sure of. There's a lake, and a marsh, and the moor, and a good lump of forest, and A1 partridge-ground—all convenient to each other. It's unique—that's what it is; and I've set my heart upon it. And now I'm to lose it, all because of

your conceited, stiff-necked temper! What *does* it matter what the Lowland tenant-farmer thinks, or does, or says, or suffers? Confound the Lowland tenant-farmer! For a day's good shooting I would agree to swear him anything from an angel to an imp of darkness; and, for the same consideration, I'd include in the same category every agriculturist, from the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same! Hang it all! what can it matter to *you?* But I've no patience with you."

"There's an effrontery about your selfishness, Tom, which is almost magnificent, from its expanse. However, you're not a humbug—not to *me*, that is to say—which is so far well. And now, for your comfort, I may tell you that I shall spare your prospects any further jeopardy by having nothing more to do with Lord Germistoune. His manner to me is nothing short of insolent. So be of good cheer. A little of your unadulterated blarney will soon set matters right for you and your unique mixed bag."

"What! you'll cut the connection altogether."

"Yes, I will."

"And Miss Douglas?"

"Well, what of her? Of course I can't meet her if I don't meet her father."

"That's a pity; you seem to pull well: but I suppose it can't be helped. After all, there's a good deal of common-sense, Cosmo, in what you say. There's an incompatibility between your temper and that old patriarch's that would lead to nothing pleasant for either of you. Your absence will certainly help my autumn scheme. On the whole, I have no objection. It won't be so pleasant, of course, going by one's self; but I can make a sacrifice for a friend at a time, I hope."

"*Of* a friend, at least, beyond any sort of question."

"That's right; have a good sneer. Don't mind me. It will do you a world of good, after bottling up so much dignity with his lordship. By the by, you've decided, I suppose, to close with Finmore?"

"No; and I don't think, on reflection, that I'll go to Scotland this autumn. I think I may go to the Dolomites, perhaps, or try the fishing in Bohemia, or make the tour of the Crimea—one ought to do that—and perhaps work through the islands of the Ægean afterwards, or——"

"Why not do the Andamans, or the Fijis, when you're about it? or, say the Antarctic

Circle? Well, you *are*—— Then, one way or other, you're determined to ruin my autumn—that's about it. So there's no good my hanging on *here* to make up my book. I'll be off. I say, by the by"—here Tom lowered his voice to a confidential tone—"do you remember what I was saying about my banker the other night?"

"No, I can't say I do, particularly; he is so often under discussion, you know."

"Why, I told you, didn't I, of his heathenish conduct, about that over-draft? and you very kindly said——"

"Did I?"

"That is, you were just going to say, when that old ass began to shout for assistance——"

But here again Tom was interrupted. "Lady and gentleman anxious to see you, sir," said a waiter, for they had now reached the hotel.

"Who are they?" said Tom.

"Don't know name, sir."

"Where, then?"

"No. 26, sir. Just arrived from Milan. Maid and courier, sir."

"Do *they* want to see me too?"

"No, sir," grinned the waiter.

"Show me up, then." And off he went, all

excitement, forgetful of his budget, and his autumn, and everything else.

"What a weathercock the fellow is!" muttered Cosmo. "No doubt his finances are in an awful state, and some one will certainly have to suffer. Just as certainly, however, Tom won't be the sufferer."

CHAPTER V.

Tom Wyedale was not again visible to his friend that evening. Apparently the anonymous party in No. 26 had proved amusing; and thus Cosmo was left to his own society. An occasional respite from Tom's eternal flow of mirth and *badinage* was not unwelcome to him, and on this afternoon it was a positive relief. Cosmo was in a thoughtful mood. He indulged it in a long saunter along the shores of the lake; and at night, when the moon rose, he went out upon his balcony overlooking the lake, and again took up the thread of his reverie.

At certain stages of life, people of a certain temperament and cast of thought seem to become suddenly conscious that their relations with the past are altogether altered—that what seemed, but yesterday, good and pleasant and fitting, must, or ought to, cease to be so any longer. Such minds do not appear (though the

process, if unconscious, must be gradual) to arrive gradually at a conviction of change, but to reach, with a bound, each new standpoint, from which the necessities of the actual present and the things of the immediate past are instantaneously discovered to have no relation to each other, but to be separated by an impassable gulf. To such, even at the outer confines of childhood, its toys become in an instant despicable. At the next stage, the delights and ambitions of adolescence are discovered, by a *coup d'œil,* to be paltry and insufficient. Later on, the goodliness of pleasure, scanned in the musings of a single night, seems in a night to pale and wither —exposed by a sudden vivid light, in which life's realities flash upon the vision, or in which duty unmasks itself and emerges from the luminous mists of illusion. And so on, doubtless, to the end; for these are only, in a more defined and emphatic form, that series of deaths and resurrections which, in ourselves, we all undergo, and which connects itself with the ultimate death which we all know we must die—with the ultimate resurrection, in which we hope to begin a new and higher life. The experiences of each past stage are the poet's "stepping-stones of their dead selves," by which men

may rise to nobler things; and those to whom each stage is thus sharply revealed ought to have the firmest foothold for the ascent.

Cosmo Glencairn was of this temperament. In his case, one of these stages had been marked by his adoption of the army as a profession, and another by his retirement from it. To the first step he was led, not merely by the natural attraction which the "career of arms" has for spirited youth, but, after the close of a studious and earnest career at the university, by a sudden reactionary feeling in favour of an active as against a studious and contemplative life. "I have learned my part for the drama of life, as much as books can teach it to me; and now I must play it. Life cannot be meant to be passed in literary *otium* or philosophical speculation. A true man's true mission is active exertion in the noblest sphere he can find. I have had enough of books. Let me act; let me be a hero!" Thus mused the young enthusiast; and his ignorance of that life in which, as he conceived, he had learned to play his part, suddenly buried his aspirations in the bathos of a cavalry regiment. Noble lives are doubtless led, and noble aspirations fulfilled, in that splendid branch of a glorious service; but the aspir-

ants are usually more patient, and have more definite and limited and less transcendental aims, than those professed by Cosmo Glencairn, who forgot that in actual warfare alone does the army offer a really exalted and heroic sphere for active exertion. But to lead an active and heroic life!—it was for this that he turned his back upon the Muses; and, after the pleasant novelty of the dramatic side of military life had worn off, he found that he was embracing a shadow where he had hoped to find a substance.

There was nothing heroic in the routine of "stables" and parades—nothing lofty in mounting guard over things that required no protection; and he was too much (or too little) of a philosopher, to like, or even venerate, the minutiæ of regimental organisation, and their liturgical observance, in consideration of that far-away end—efficiency before the enemy—which they are designed to subserve. The patience which does so consciously is eminently laudible, and may indeed be altogether heroic; but Cosmo's heroism was of a different stamp. Yet youth, however earnest and philosophical, is youth after all—Mr Stuart Mill's venerable infancy notwithstanding; and the weariness and disappointment which his mistaken choice

of a profession entailed, were for a time neutralised, or at least quieted, by those first experiences of social pleasure which are so delightful when life opens in a burst of sunshine. Many of the best gifts of Fortune — youth, health, wealth, personal charms, gay surroundings, troops of pleasant friends, promotion coming quickly, as it often comes to those who care nothing for it,—all these were Cosmo's. It was a glittering life ; and it was only at the end of five years that the conviction flashed upon him that the brightness was not the effulgence of sterling gold. But then it came suddenly, embodied in the following reflections : "It is all pleasure — nothing else. What we call 'duty' is simply mechanical, calling for nothing but the slightest physical exertion. I am doing nothing ; I am thinking nothing ; I am losing ground intellectually. The world is none the better for me. I am altogether deteriorating in the sphere which I have chosen; I must leave it at once. Nothing else seems open to me—no other field for high or even useful effort. After all, I am ignorant and uncultivated, and fit for nothing. I thought myself educated when I left college, but I find that I had only learned the alphabet, and I

have been unlearning it ever since. Self-culture — that must be my first business; when that is complete, the hidden uses of my existence may be revealed."

The immediate consequence of all this was, a few weeks later, the 'Gazette' announcement: "—— Dragoon Guards.—Captain Cosmo Glencairn retires from the service by the sale of his commission;" and the departure of the ex-dragoon shortly after, with a trunk full of promiscuous literature, science, art, and philosophy, to qualify for the discovery of the hidden uses of his existence, in a tour through Europe. Cosmo did not plunge haphazard into his travels, shaping and changing his course by passing caprice. He set about his educational pilgrimage in a most systematic way; and his appearance at any special place generally marked a stage of progress in some particular study. History, art, systems of philosophy, systems of religion, ethnology—such and such like—were the companions, the directors, the objects of his travel; and, since the strongholds of art and history lie for the most part in pleasant and romantic lands, his poetic fancy and his love for the beautiful were for ever receiving fresh delights and new instruction. His tour was by no means

a continuous one; it was regularly broken every year by a return home for several months, which were spent in visiting his friends, and in that Highland sport which he loved almost as well as did the feverish intriguer — his friend Tom Wyedale.

Thus had passed more than three years; and the years of Cosmo's life were eight-and-twenty —a great age, as it appeared to him—a great many years to have been passed in receiving seed, without the issue of a single grain of harvest crop. And on this night, looking down from his balcony upon the still and moonlit waters, this conviction—the spirit, perhaps, of another stage — fell upon him. Deep was his depression, deep his self-dissatisfaction, as he reviewed his own career and the process of his own self-culture. He came to the conclusion that, after all his pains, he was still but at the threshold of knowledge, and as far removed as ever from achievement of any sort. "Born to be a cipher, a dreamer, at best a *dilettante*." Such was his despairing verdict on himself, as it well may be that of others who, however cultivated, neither test nor utilise their acquirements, by carrying them into the field of active competition with other men. And what then?

The future seemed to be a blank. Was this another recoil from the contemplative to the active life, destined to mark the commencement of a new phase in his history? He certainly believed it to be so. Of one thing he was convinced — that from his wandering life all the good, if any, that could be derived from it, had been already extracted, and that it ought to cease. But in the future there was a blank; and even for the time, in his own consciousness, all onward impulses to effort and achievement seemed to be paralysed. The darkness of soul which falls at times so overwhelmingly upon the children of genius, fell down upon him — that darkness which permits the sufferer to see nothing save his own impotence, the incompleteness of the highest human effort, the shortness of life and the narrow limits of human power in comparison with the magnitude of human aspiration,—these, and, written everywhere and standing out in letters of fire on the walls of this mental prison-house, a mournful inscription declaring that "all is vanity." The steps which led up to the conclusion that his wandering life must cease, had no doubt been many, though passed over all but unconsciously; but some proximate cause of especial energy there must

have been to develop and unmask the conviction, and to bring about this state of despondency, from the midst of which it sprang into evidence. The task is not for us to grope through psychological labyrinths, and discover, for the concurrence of intellectual convictions and strange phases of moral consciousness, the explanation of a common cause. Suffice it to say, that something in the events of the day had produced the feeling of despondency; and the sentiment of self-dissatisfaction which usually accompanies it, had naturally issued in the conviction that a change of life was necessary. But what was that something which set the whole process in motion? Cosmo himself could not have told you. It certainly could not have been the disturbance of his equanimity by Lord Germistoune's unpleasant tone and bearing towards him. Certainly not. He could never have allowed himself to be more than irritated by any one whom he held in contempt. Was it in reality the discovery of a new want—the unconscious perception of a void in his life, in his being, revealed by the existence of that which might satisfy the one by filling the other? Well, but what was the want? and what could supply it? All was misty, dark,

and perplexing, and Cosmo's cogitations brought no solution.

It was late when they came to a close, and he turned from the balcony. But as he turned, the moon, which for a time had been obscured, dropped, far away out upon the lake, a solitary circle of silver light. Complete and solitary, it gleamed for a moment with a weird effulgence— isolated in the darkness of surrounding waters— gleamed thus for a moment, then slowly widened, and at last gradually broke into a thousand tremulous shafts, from the midst of which one broad smooth avenue of mellow fire went solemnly to landward. It crept up through the gardens of the Villa Bianca, and bathed its glittering walls; it stole over the exuberant foliage of the woods behind, and absorbed into its breadth of light the snowy glints that flashed from plumes of feathery blossom, — till, from the lake to the hill-top, it lay like the path of some blessed angel who paused a moment on his heavenward way and rested upon Esmè's home. Oh, mother Nature! beauteous and benign — mother that never yet deceived the heart that loved thee well—was this the mute response of thy tender oracle to the bewilderment of a spirit that dimly felt, but could not utter, its enigma?

CHAPTER VI.

Tom Wyedale was by no means a domestic character. So much may have already been surmised. His intercourse with his relations was intermittent and spasmodic, depending very often upon the state of his exchequer. Barometric pressure in that quarter was usually accompanied by a rise in the thermometer of his family affections, and *vice versâ;* and in the latter condition there generally intervened between him and his people a certain haze which concealed from either party the whereabouts and movements of the other. Tom was the kind of fellow whom one meets without surprise in any part of the habitable globe; lounging in the "Street of Hermes," or loafing in "Fifth Avenue;" swarming up the "Cordilleras;" in "the Corso," in "Rotten Row," in the "Maidaan;" punting at San Francisco or Monte Carlo; in the ring at Epsom, at Longchamps, or Deyrah

Doon,—wherever men are conspicuous by their presence or their absence; and very especially where money is to be lightly made and lightly lost. His own appreciation of time and space being blunted by his erratic habits, he was prepared, in his turn, to meet any one anywhere without astonishment. Thus, when he walked into No. 26 and found his brother-in-law and his sister, Mr and Mrs Francis Ravenhall, his only emotion was one of slight regret that his summons had not come from a more interesting quarter.

"Oh, it's you, Lucy, is it?" he said as he entered; "I couldn't think who it could be. How are you, Frank? Well, what brings you Londoners here at this time of year, when the gay and voluptuous throng the haunts of folly? and how does the senator escape from the toils of lawgiving? How does the wisdom of the nation thrive without its mainspring?"

"Oh, Frank has been out of sorts — overworked; too many committees, and then the night-work. We have come away for a month's complete rest."

"As Frank's night-work usually consists of eating big, good dinners, and playing small, bad whist, I think we can promise him perfect repose down here. But is this your destination?"

"Well, we haven't quite decided on anything. As we were passing through Milan, we met the Phillipses, and heard a charming account of the weather here, and also that you were here; so we thought we might as well run down and try it: and here we are. What a time it is since we have seen you! Where have you been? What have you been doing with yourself? What can you be doing in this quiet place? Are you alone?"

"Too- many questions, impetuous sister. *Commençons par le commencement.* Where have I been? I answer, like the wind, 'Where have I not been?' Well, I was in Albania February and a bit of March, with Bertie Radcliffe. We lived on board his yacht, you know, and landed to shoot. The shooting was fair, and the yacht well found, and the cook really quite a gentleman; but it was rather a sacrifice of time. However, I didn't mind. The fact is, Bertie's wife ran away from him, as I daresay you know, last winter, and my post is ever with the afflicted."

"Particularly when they have good cooks and good shooting."

"Providence has placed me in such a sphere that I am usually called to mingle my tears with those of affluence; but, had I been born in fus-

tian, they would have been equally at the disposal of brother chaw-bacons. We all have our missions, Lucinda. We ought all to be thankful for such chances of sacrifice as come our way. We ought not to grudge to others the more delicious depths of self-abnegation and misery with which they may have been blessed."

"Well, well, Monsieur Tartuffe, and when did you leave Sir Albert?"

"As soon as I could, kindly and consistently. Bertie benefited immensely in spirits by the shooting; and when the best of it was over, he was quite another man, and I was able to leave him. He went on to the Piræus: indeed he wanted me to go with him; and I might have done so, but unfortunately his admirable cook fell through a hatchway and broke three of his ribs, which put him *hors de combat*, of course; and then I felt that an extra mouth to feed, in a scratch sort of way, would be a burden—so I left him. After that, I went home for a week or two, and was at Newmarket for 'The Guineas.' By the by, Frank, didn't you dine with me in town one night about that time?"

"Certainly not."

"Quite sure?"

"I haven't set eyes on you for eight months."

"No? I fancied I remembered your making a row about a bad truffle at the Windham. I daresay, after all, it was old Jack Ruggles. He is just like you, you know—thinks of nothing but his grub. I believe it *was* old Jack."

"Much obliged to you for the compliment."

"Well, then, let me see, where was I? I really *was* very unfortunate at Newmarket, and my banker—you have no conception what a villain that man is, Lucy—behaved scandalously; and altogether, it was convenient to give up a summer campaign in town; and when I heard from my old crony, Cosmo Glencairn, that he was in Florence, and going to moon about in this part of the world for a bit, I thought I might as well join him. Cosmo and I hit it off exactly. He is a quiet, studious man. Our habits are similar, and we are mutually of use to each other in our pursuits."

"Pray what are your pursuits?" asked Mr Ravenhall.

"Severely intellectual, Frank. I am trying to solve as knotty a problem as ever knit the brows of thought."

"And what may that be?"

"I am haunted by the desire to disprove the Epicurean dictum, '*De nihilo nihil in nihilum*

nil posse reverti' — nothing from nothing is made, nothing to nothing returns. Do you know where the horrible hexameter comes from?"

"No, I don't."

"No matter. I can't remember; and of course, in a parliament of plutocrats, classic lore don't pay, and you're not likely to know. But the pith of it—the major proposition—can you disprove it?"

"I think so."

"Will you back yourself against Epicurus for six hundred sovereigns?"

"You know I never bet."

"I hate a fellow who hasn't the courage of his opinions. But never mind, disprove it."

"The world was made out of nothing."

"Oh Solomon! what a bold assertion! Nevertheless, *conceditur*. Well, but let us descend to humbler regions, and apply the case where it affects a man who hasn't the slightest desire to make a world."

"Well, well, well?"

"Well?"

"What are you driving at, man alive?"

"Man alive, I want to draw out of void a tangible something."

"Oh, you're getting beyond me."

"Exactly what my banker said when I stated this very case to him in a less abstract form—viz., that I wanted to overdraw my account, which was empty, by six hundred sovereigns. There was the void and the tangible something, all *en règle*. The fellow has no orthodoxy; when pressed, it turned out that he held with Epicurus obstinately. 'While you have no "effects,"' he said, in his hideous jargon, 'it is impossible for us to honour your drafts.' *Hinc illæ lacrymæ!*"

"Oh Tom, Tom, you are incorrigible!" cried his sister. "All this fine philosophy only comes to the old, old, tiresome story."

"No one can be more tired of it than I am, Lucy."

"Then why don't you do something?"

"I piped to promotion in the Civil Service of my country till I was short of breath, but it declined to dance. In an age of mediocrity there is no market for genius."

"What are you about, then?"

"I tell you, I have been trying to confute Epicurus without success, and it's getting serious, Lucy—I can tell you, very serious. It has been serious for certain people for a long time—so my creditors assure me; but now it's becoming grave for myself. In fact, Epicurus proving correct,

my immediate future is, financially speaking, rather more than cloudy. Don't you think, now, that the squire might for once——"

"No, Tom; I'm sure he won't—not 'for once,' by the by, but for the tenth time. He becomes furious when your name is mentioned."

"That fellow has the soul of Cain. Well, then——" and here Tom's gaze rested mournfully on his brother-in-law.

"Don't look at me, Tom—don't look at *me!*" cried that gentleman hastily, and nervously buttoning his coat.

"Don't be afraid, Frank," said Tom, changing his look to one of contempt; "if the man who fell among thieves were to be similarly unfortunate a second time, do you think he would waste a glance upon the Levite? Not a bit of him. No more do I."

"Very well, then—very well," gobbled Mr Ravenhall, with rising choler; "we're both satisfied."

"That I am satisfied, I deny; that you should be satisfied, is discouraging to one who hopes for the amelioration of the species."

"Well, now," cried Mr Ravenhall, addressing an imaginary audience—"well, now, here is a fellow who has wasted his patrimony, and thrown

away his chances of getting on. Here is a fellow who is in debt—deeply in debt—for the twelfth time——"

"There have not been eleven liquidations, old man," interpolated Tom.

"A fellow, I say, who is in debt deeply, and who expects his friends to get him out of his scrapes, while he lives—lives——"

"Like a fighting-cock, you mean; but I don't —not at my own expense, at least."

"Lives, I say, a life of idle extravagance and pleasure; here is this fellow——" but here Mr Ravenhall's eloquence failed him.

"Well," said Tom, "errors excepted, here he is; *après?*"

"Well, hang me, if he oughtn't to feel his position!"

"He does, my boy: what he complains of is, that others don't."

"Why didn't you take the secretaryship to Mr Foozler when I got it for you?"

"I hate encouraging fraud. Mr Foozler would have started on my brains as a first-class parliamentary speaker. Besides, I decline to cram a politician to whom my principles are opposed."

"Principles! Pray what are your principles?"

"Patriotic (and personal) Conservatism."

"Patriotic fiddlesticks! They have their price, I'll be bound."

"So will I; but as yet, the price has not been offered. To return to Epicurus, I am that void out of which that nothing—radicalism—cannot be produced for nothing."

"And what the deuce does the man mean to do?"

"We go round in a circle, my legislator; the man solicits tenders of advice and assistance on that very point. The Epicureans——"

"Oh, d—n the Epicureans!" shouted Mr Ravenhall; and clapping his hat on his head, he bounced out of the room. Tom threw himself into a chair with a shout of laughter.

"Frank," he cried, "is evidently not a Stoic, and he curses the Epicureans; what manner of philosopher, then, is Frank?"

"You ought not to vex and tease Frank."

"Why is he so confoundedly rusty, then?"

"He is not well, poor fellow; and then your light tone about money and your difficulties vexes him. He has a great regard for you, and believes you to have ability, and can't bear to see you waste yourself. Admit, Tom, that you *are* provoking, and reckless, and unsatisfactory, and——"

"Altogether charming. Yes, I will admit anything to your sisterly ear; but I say, Lucy, don't you really think you *might* draw the squire for me? I'll let him off as cheap as I can—upon my word I will; and you might even hint that if I have a good 'Leger' I might refund. I suppose, perhaps that *would* be too strong, though. At all events, you may use full discretion."

"No, Tom."

"Come, Lucy: appeal to his brotherly feelings; say I'm looking thin and wretched. How would it do to suggest that want of proper nourish——"

"No, no, Tom; there has been quite too much of that sort of thing already. He has never forgiven that mythical rheumatic fever in Bulgaria."

"Ah! that was awkward; but who could have expected him to turn up at Wiesbaden? What right had he to come to Wiesbaden?"

"No, Tom; there's nothing to be expected from him or any of us. You must really help yourself."

"But how?"

"Ah! that's the question. On the whole, I see nothing for it but to do as I have advised before. You must marry money."

Tom made a wry face.

"You *might* have married Miss Carter, you know; she had £130,000."

"Might I?"

"Every one said so."

"Except herself."

"Try to be in earnest for a moment."

"Well, failing Miss C.?"

"You must look about you."

"I can't look about me without money. Epicurus and the void meet us at every turn."

"You have seen no one suitable?"

"Not I."

"We must think."

"Well, that's cheap, at all events."

"By the by, Mrs Phillips said the Germistounes were here."

"They are."

"He is an old friend of mine; he was a great friend of poor Uncle Tom's. By the by, the girl must be grown up, is she not?"

"By the by, how cunning we are! Yes, she is grown up."

"And you have met her?"

"Certainly."

"And—and——"

"No, Lucy; I'm not a marrying man."

"If it is between marriage and starvation?"

"*Quien sabe?*"

"Come, Tom, be sensible. Is she nice?"

"Yes."

"And pretty?"

"Cosmo Glencairn calls her a Madonna."

"Cosmo Glencairn! hem!—does *he* admire her?"

"As a sensible man may, who can afford to be jolly *without* marrying."

"Reprobates! Well, there is an heiress for you. It must be £20,000 a-year at least.

"Very likely; but there are three to a bargain in this case: self, first; damsel, second; last, but not least, angry father."

"Faint heart never won fair lady."

"I don't think it's in my line, Lucy. I don't know how to set about it; and I should get sick of the business before the climax. She is a nice girl, and pretty, and rich, and all the rest of it—but what am I?"

"Oh, you're good-looking, and clever, and can make yourself charming if you choose, and——"

"You sweet sister! and a younger son barnacled with debts, and perhaps not of the best possible reputation."

"Why, you've done nothing *very* wrong, have you?"

"No, no—nothing that every one else *doesn't* do; but 'every one else' is a little disreputable in the eyes of the old world. Ah, that old lord! I shudder to think of his imperial aspect when I proffer my suit and tell the unvarnished tale of my impecuniosity. Besides, an heiress of *that* sort, Lucy! Surely she is above my flight?"

"Nothing and nobody are above a man's flight, if he will only use his wings perseveringly."

"But an heiress, not merely of money, not merely of lands, but of territories, mountains in the Highlands, mines in the Lowlands, tracts of arable everywhere; and last, not least, a pedigree. Good heavens! a Scotch pedigree! going back to the period of the mastodon! That is a kind of heirloom which the old lord would not like to transmit to the keeping of a mere fellow like me."

"Our family is as old as most."

"Yes; but we have none of the thin blue blood of Caledonian thanes who lived and robbed long before the heptarchy. I suspect that would be a *sine quâ non* in this case. I

don't remember that there is any larceny in our pedigree."

"How did you get on with his lordship?"

"Famously. I 'compassed him with observances,' having an eye to some shooting at his place this autumn. Shooting!—by heavens! that's something like a game estate. By heavens! Lucy, if the match *did* come off, I should have quite the best general shooting I know; and if I were to buy the next place, Pockmahalakin (pretty title, by the by, for an eldest son—'Baron Pockmahalakin!'), even the forest would be a good deal more than respectable. I'm not sure that I wouldn't drain the lake and plant it—part of it, at least; there's far more than enough now: part of it would be the very thing for a polo-ground. And then ponies from the Shetland Islands, crossed with Norwegian! By George! we'd have a kind of polo undreamt of at Hurlingham. We'd make it a national sport, and swear it a revival. With plenty of bagpipes and yelling, it would be accepted as the familiar recreation of Scottish royalty in the days of Kenneth M'Alpine. I myself, as 'The M'Wyedale,' in a suitable tartan invented by Poole—by that time appeased and an ally——"

"Oh Tom, Tom! I begin to despair of you."

"Well, Lucy, enough of sorrow. Let us, for the moment, cast this matrimonial physic to the dogs. Upon my honour, I'm in a very ugly corner, and will place myself in your hands, and *will* follow your advice, if you think you see your way out of it; yea, though the gates of matrimony should have to open for me. But even for you, Lucy, my Lord of Germistoune will be a hard nut to crack. I tell him off to you, of course. Be mine the sweeter task to throw glamour over his 'Princess of Thule,' if I can; and so—

> All hail, M'Wyedale! hail to thee, Thane of Dunerlacht!
> All hail, M'Wyedale! hail to thee, Thane of Ferniehall!
> All hail, M'Wyedale! that shalt be Pockmahalakin!—

and here comes Frank, *à la bonne heure.* Well, Frank, we've laid the ghost of Epicurus; and I've repented, reformed, and become practical. Lucy and I have been arranging a new scheme of life for your contrite brother-in-law. But of that to-morrow; and now let me have all the gossip. But first, by the by, about dinner?"

"We've ordered it here at 7.30. Will you join us?"

"I am here. *Quis separabit?* A capital

speech, by the by, Frank, that of yours, on the Canadian Railway Guarantee business; quite to the point."

"Oh, you read that?"

"Read it? we all read it; for once your principles are mine."

"I'm glad you liked it."

"Oh, it was quite first-rate. By the by, about the wine here—avoid Rœderer's champagne. I hope you haven't ordered *that?* It's spurious, and they always try to force it."

"No, I hadn't ordered *any* champagne."

"Lucky, by Jove! Then—*experto crede*—order 'Pomery and Greno,' vintage '65; that's the stuff for a legislator—and his connections."

"You're an original, Tom, certainly," said Mr Ravenhall; but he was mollified by the compliment to his speech, and the 'Pomery' *was* forthcoming. Tom, thus fortified, was pleased to be extremely amusing, and the party broke up at last on the most amiable terms.

"I will call on the Germistounes to-morrow," said his sister to Tom as they separated.

"Good night, best of sisters! and, I am sure, of sisters-in-law to be," said Tom.

CHAPTER VII.

Mr and Mrs Francis Ravenhall were a childless couple, and having no offspring to expend their affections upon, they supplied the blank by adopting the world, and loving it with all their hearts and with all their strength. They had begun life poor, for the Ravenhall estate had been dipped by extravagant predecessors; but minerals and other wealth-bringing developments had progressively enriched them, and, at last, the splendid accident that a town required to be built on the property had made them immensely wealthy. Mr Ravenhall had the narrow selfishness, the ignoble ambitions, and that earnestness in the *cultus* of wealth, rank, and success, which constitute a worldly man, without the redeeming *savoir faire* which distinguishes a man of the world. He was also stupid at all times, and arrogant on occasion. Altogether he was of the earth earthy. His wife

was also endowed with all the characteristics of worldliness; but this, which so deeply degrades the woman from the ideal standard of true womanliness, was qualified in her case by the charming attributes of a woman of the world. She had tact, adaptiveness, and a wonderful power of (spurious) sympathy. Clever and witty, she never said an ill-natured thing, or allowed her love of a *mot* to drown prudential considerations, or to betray her into wit at the expense of friends and acquaintances, actual or possible. "Speak nothing but fair words, and you will hear nothing but kind echoes." She laid the proverb closely to her heart. One half of her life she devoted to the acquisition of new acquaintanceships—"friendships" she called them; and the other half to sifting her acquisitions. The wheat were the people who could be of some advantage to her; the chaff were the hopeless ineligibles. The former were assiduously garnered: the latter were not brusquely cast into the fire; they were simply let alone, till the wind, blowing where it listed, gradually removed them from her orbit. The chaff often believed the act of separation to be due to their own carelessness or fickleness. Such is the power of tact. Morally speaking, the husband and wife were

probably on the same level, and that a sufficiently low one; but he was detested—and she was universally *liked*, at least. Mrs Ravenhall, desiring to get on, had found herself heavily handicapped with such a husband; indeed she would probably have been altogether overweighted — probably she would have broken down—but that the change of fortune which made them so rich came in time to save them. Nevertheless, she toiled and spun, and wheedled, and coaxed, and courted the world, so that it endured her, and almost tolerated the sight of her husband for her sake. And then, when prosperity came — wealth, great wealth — the world arose, and came forth, and took them both in its arms, and bore them up, and brought them in, and made as though they had been its favourites and darlings all along, instead of miserable, neglected, gnashers of teeth, standing at the gates, in the cold and dark, hungry for faint passing smiles and strangled recognitions. The world, having taken Mr Ravenhall into favour, at once decided that he should be a legislator; and, since Radicalism was in vogue at the time, he became a Radical. Toryism was not a social necessity for him, since, though his family had been poor, it was very ancient, and had been

eminent long ago; and he, or rather his wife, saw three things: first, that Radicalism was the winning side at the time; second, that a change from the creed of one's predecessors suggests individuality and a personal view; third, that the great programme of Radicalism was so cut and dried, and had been so reiterated and ventilated on platform and by press, that any one could, without any exertion, make an appearance on the programme without risk of blundering, and with some certainty of applause. To swim, as a Tory, against the tide, was a very different thing; and so Mr Ravenhall, with no principle save his own self-interests, which English Radicalism did not seem gravely to imperil, became a Radical. His wife then noted two other things: first, that her husband's intellectual defects put any sort of political success beyond his reach; and second, that there being thus no call for thorough-going partisanship, another kind of success was to be procured by occasional fits of recalcitrancy against the *mots d'ordre* of the party. Occasional rather eccentric junctions with the Opposition — not carried too far, of course, and always labelled "conscience" — made the leaders of both parties civil and considerate. Social advantages flowed from this;

and the constituency, watching the division lists, were able, every now and then, to say that "whatever else their member was, or was not, he had views of his own, patriotic views, and the courage of his opinions. Moreover, that he was no time-server, that he had a strong fund of masculine common-sense, and was a bluff, straightforward Englishman." Men who have become rich — no matter how — *are* generally credited in England with "masculine common-sense;" and if their bluffness and straightforwardness are only the stupid, brutal perverseness and *brusquerie* of the plebeian and the pauper, with some gilding on it, what does it matter to any one save the ruffian, who is erroneously believed to be "bluff" rather than brutal? Altogether, Mrs Ravenhall made her husband's legislatorial capacity minister greatly to her social advancement; and with a talent for utilising everything to that end, she turned even his "bluffness" to account. Much expenditure of money was, however, necessary; and here she had a difficulty, for Mr Ravenhall was by nature close-fisted, and many of his wife's finest projects were often in danger from a threatened stoppage of the supplies. Yet, in the end, she usually prevailed; for she had gained an ascendancy

over him, founded, not on domestic love, but on the (unacknowledged) conviction that without her co-operation he would, in every department of life, be "lost to use, and name, and fame."

"Then I have done with the matter, Frank. Take your own way, and see what you can make of it."

These words, pronounced firmly, and a firm refusal to urge or listen to further argument, were generally effective, and, as time went on, had less and less to be put in requisition.

Grand were the entertainments of the member for the county of ——. His country place became the centre of county life and fashion. Notable were his banquets in Belgrave Square. Great people were notoriously to be met there—ministers and diplomatists, strong men in finance, subtle men of law, mighty men of letters and of valour, poets, gastronomers, projectors, thinkers, and talkers; Haroun al Raschid, occasionally—and Ali Baba, from the Stock Exchange, pleasantly often. Nor was the more difficult sex deficient. There were ladies of the right sort, plentiful and cordial, stamping Mr and Mrs Ravenhall with the *cachet* of fashion. Social success is often stated to be of the nature of a fluke. One constantly hears it said that, to

people of equal advantages, Fortune arbitrarily awards success or failure. This looks like the truth very often indeed; but examine more closely, and you will find at the bottom of success a subtle, unobtrusive, social talent, and the capability of a sleepless attention to the minutiæ of the code of *bienséances*, so that the candidate for success may not only not be guilty of offence against the same, but not even be brought, or bring others, into any sort of association with profane ideas.

This subtle talent and this capability Mrs Ravenhall fully possessed. If she had had daughters of even moderate attractions, it is scarcely doubtful that so admirable a priestess of Mammon, in placing them upon the altar of her god, would have managed to see that the temple supplied combustibles of the costliest and most distinguished description. Having none, however, her great faculties involved a certain waste of power. If she loved any one in the world, she really loved her brother Tom; and for him indeed she would have schemed matrimonially, and doubtless triumphed, if only he would have co-operated. But, even in these days, a courtship can hardly be carried on by one principal, however skilfully the missing party may be repre-

sented by his second; and Tom, regarding matrimony merely as a specific for the preservation of large balances in bank, his ideas and intentions thereon changed with the spasmodic rapidity of his financial condition.

As an instance, he was once on the very edge of the holy estate, but forty-eight hours' continuous rain immediately preceding the Derby Day, threw out the favourite, against whom Tom had gone heavily; and a golden shower absolving him for the time from matrimonial necessities, he disappeared abruptly, and wrote, shortly after, to his sister, under date "Hombourg," to the effect that she must "square it somehow with Miss ——, seeing that, for the present, Providence had rescued him from the 'abyss.'" Under many such discouragements, Mrs Ravenhall, if she had relaxed her efforts, had not abandoned hope; and occasionally, when Tom was known to be in an unusual state of dilapidation, she advanced some new project, and never at least lost an opportunity of preaching her gospel to him. Mainly from personal motives, but partly, too, at the instance of his wife, Mr Ravenhall had inflexibly refused to assist Tom in his recurring crises; but as it was generally through his sister as mediator that he did, or rather

attempted to do, what he called his "family financing," she was, as a rule, cognisant of the state of his affairs.

Now it happened that she was at this time, though indirectly, very well informed on the subject, and knew Tom to be in the deepest possible water. It also happened that she knew a great deal more of his whereabouts and surroundings than she pretended or he imagined. In fact, the sudden diversion from Milan was by no means the sudden, improvised raid she gave it out to be; nor was it by any means unconnected with the fact that, in addition to her brother, Miss Douglas, the heiress of Lord Germistoune, was domiciled by the romantic waters of Como. Here were golden opportunities! Here was a concurrence of circumstances that seemed to lend themselves to the consolidation of her scapegrace brother and his affairs. Propinquity, a monotonous life, with beautiful surroundings; the season of the year "when a young man's (or maiden's) fancy lightly turns to thoughts of love;" the opportunities of free country intercourse, — these, and many other points as favourable to the birth and growth of the tender passion, were noted by this practical observer of human nature. Then Tom's neces-

sities being added to these, it appeared to her that his fascinations might safely be trusted to do the rest. She was not likely, therefore, to forget her resolution to open the campaign at once. But here Mr Ravenhall was a difficulty. She knew all about Lord Germistoune—his autocratic disposition, his fierce prejudices, his narrow Toryism; and she felt that, without both luck and management, things would not go smoothly between the noble lord and the bluff member for ——shire. But, to suit her plans, things *must* go smoothly; otherwise the necessary intercourse would be impossible. To laugh off his lordship's attacks, which would certainly be forthcoming, and disarm him by good-humour, and even by playfully carrying the war into the enemy's camp—she saw that these were the only tactics; but how to have them carried out?—there was the difficulty: for her husband, though subservient enough to rank and wealth, was beginning to swell somewhat in his own esteem; and as for anything in the way of light and genial banter, that was not to be expected of him. He was bluff; and to ask him to be bluff and playful at once, was like inviting an elephant to get on its hind legs and conduct itself like a kangaroo.

Waking early on the morning after her meeting with Tom, she revolved all these considerations in her politic mind, and decided that Ravenhall must be drilled to play an entirely secondary *rôle*, in the first place at least—she herself proposing to receive the earliest shock of the noble Tory's attack. All she proposed for her husband, for the present, was that he should be silent; wear, if possible, a gay smile; shake his head in comic deprecation when Lord Germistoune was unusually violent; and honour anything approaching a *bon mot*, even at his own expense, with peals of frank laughter, which should imply that, in the presence of so much wit, even Principle was obliged to cover its face with its pocket-handkerchief and shake its sides in its own despite.

The "Pomery and Greno" of the night before had, however, settled the matter otherwise. It had disagreed with Mr Ravenhall; and he, awaking with a headache, proved to be entirely intractable. He used a good deal of rough language about Lord Germistoune, Toryism, Tom, love, debt, the champagne, even about his own head, and was clearly minded to be as bluff and bouncing and abominable as need be, against all comers, without respect to weight or age.

"Well, then, Frank," said his wife, at last, "we'll say no more about it at present. You have got a headache, and your headaches are always tragedies. You'll see things differently to-morrow. You'd better lie still in bed, and I'll take Tom with me instead. On second thoughts, I believe it will be every way the better plan. I'll take Tom."

Whereupon her lord freely assented that she should take Tom, and proceed with him into outer darkness, and even remain there permanently if so disposed.

Tom looked rather rueful when summoned by his sister to accompany her. He had pledged himself with a light heart the night before to follow his sister's guidance, with only the condition that she was to pilot him out of his difficulties — with a light heart, lightened by dry champagne, and with that recklessness, common to men of his character, which, to stave off a disagreeable subject for the immediate present, will discount even the immediate future, and purchase, with any sort of pledge, a hazy, temporary conviction "that all will come right somehow." His maxim was to keep the present "jolly," and let the future look after itself. "It is better," he would say, "to

have lots of sun, with occasional violent thunderstorms, than to live always under a drizzle and a drab-coloured sky. I would rather have a good strong agony once in six months or so, and take it neat, than go on sipping agony-and-water all the days of my life." He hated the idea of the future. For him it was simply a dun with a bill, or a peremptory banker with an overdue acceptance—an undiluted "agony" in some shape or other. So that it was rather with a feeling of ill-usage and of being prematurely hustled that he found himself brought to book on his undertaking, not a day old, and compelled to open the distasteful campaign of love-making.

"Of course I'll go, Lucy," he said, "because I promised; but it's awfully sudden. I thought you were to feel your way a bit."

"There is no time to lose, Tom."

"Marriage is the very devil, Lucy."

Perhaps Mrs Ravenhall's experiences pointed to the same conclusion; but she, too, retorted that there were many other devils familiar to Tom, and feared by him, that were more formidable; and, silenced by this argument, he went meekly to the villa.

All Mrs Ravenhall's charms of manner and conversation — and they were many — were

brought into requisition at the visit. She dug up her uncle — the "jolly Tom Wyedale" of Lord Germistoune's early friendship — a man who had been the privileged parliamentary humorist of his time, the Yorick in a circle of brilliant wits, the delight of clubs, of *salons*, of all "*quantum est hominum venustiorum*,"— she dug him up, and ventilated him and his epoch very thoroughly, adroitly reflecting his glory upon his ancient friend. She then proceeded to display the brilliancy which she had inherited from Uncle Yorick, and to captivate, as he had captivated, the old gentleman whom she was anxious to get into her toils. Her success was complete. Lord Germistoune's conquest was absolute; so that, when he did get upon politics, he was graciously pleased to say that Radicalism could not be all bad if it found an adherent in Mrs Ravenhall. Whereupon she earnestly but playfully disclaimed the awful epithet "Radical," for self and even for partner.

"We are only progressive," she said—"gently progressive. We are not partisans; we have a conscience. Sometimes our conscience tells us to progress, gently; sometimes it bids us obstruct, firmly. But, *entre nous*, if things go much

further, we *shall* have to shift our side—*entre nous*, very strictly, please, dear Lord Germistoune."

"The Irish Church——" began Lord Germistoune.

"Oh, please, pray, don't talk of that most distressing subject. If you knew what we suffered, and suffer, about that hazardous measure, you would spare me."

"I am sure I have no wish to give you pain."

"It is the worst of following conscience, that it often misleads one, and then turns round and rebukes one, as if one had misled *it*."

"The only remedy is to be thoroughly partisan. The collective conscience of a party is more reliable than any individual one."

"One almost begins to despair of seeing any other remedy; but then to follow the conscience of the Liberal party *à outrance*, that would be simply imposs—— But you must not make me talk treason, my lord—while it *is* treason," she added, with a meaning smile; "and, *apropos*, may I beg you to be gentle with my husband on political matters when you meet him? He is much perturbed in mind just now; and I could wish none but calm influences to bear upon him while *the struggle* is going on."

Whereupon the lady was assured that her wish was his lordship's law in all matters, and that the wind of his noble logic and satire should be tempered to the Radical lamb, albeit still unshorn of his evil Radical fleece.

And then she changed the subject, and asked Lord Germistoune frankly, as an old family friend, what he thought of Tom, and if he did not find in that worthy strong traits of resemblance to Uncle Yorick. And his lordship's answer being very hearty and satisfactory on these points, she proceeded to dilate upon Tom's excellences of head and heart — his brilliancy, his shrewdness, his common-sense,—all wasted, however, for want of a career. "Can we do nothing for him, Lord Germistoune? Can we find no means of turning so much talent to account? He is a red-hot Tory, you know; and they say your party is to be in soon. The party ought to keep an eye on its brilliant young men."

"True, true—*very* true. We must see—we must see. I think there need be no difficulty about finding him a seat before long."

"The worst of it is, that poor Tom was extravagant at Cambridge—fell into bad hands—and he really wants money. Now a seat would hardly meet that difficulty, would it?"

Lord Germistoune feared not, but suggested that a likely young fellow such as Tom might very well feather his nest by matrimony, as a preliminary step to adorning the House, and eventually the Cabinet. Saul also was among the prophets.

Here Mrs Ravenhall shook her head. She was, she said, perhaps a little romantic, and could *not* pretend to like the idea of mercenary marriages. Still, of course, love and money *might* come together — might come together, very likely, with a little skill and management. But as for Tom, he was altogether impracticable on this point — quite foolishly Quixotic about it, the dear fellow was. The idea of marrying a woman *for* money was in his eyes such an abomination, that it was doubtful if he could be brought to marry a woman *with* money, even where his affections were strongly engaged. At all events, the attraction of the heart would require to be something out of the common run if it were to subdue this *idée fixe*.

Lord Germistoune, from the superior eminence of the worldling, laughed at all this; but was confiding enough to believe in Tom's sincerity, and to think it high-minded. "But mark my words, dear lady: let the chance

come, and the love, and all the other things, and he'll reconcile himself to the hard fate of marrying a fortune—ha, ha!"

Mrs Ravenhall again shook her head, in denial of her devout aspiration; she shook it pretty firmly this time, for they were treading delicate ground, and changed the subject. She changed it, however, neatly, and to her brother's advantage. "Tom," she said, "is more wedded to sport at present than anything else, and his earnestness about it is quite too comic. This morning he is in a state of despair about his autumn plans. It appears that he and his friend Mr Glencairn were to have taken a shooting together somewhere in the Highlands—near your beautiful place, I think; and after it was all arranged, as I understand, Mr Glencairn takes it into his head that he will travel instead, and poor Tom is left in the lurch, without his shooting. Is it not a shame? Poor Tom! he has so little amusement!"

"Ah! I don't fancy that friend of his. It is quite what was to be expected. Distinctly monstrous! But let him come to me instead—let him come to me. We have shooting enough at Dunerlacht to satisfy him, I'll be bound. Let him come, and stay as long as he likes.

He's the best of company; he'll never wear out his welcome. I think he'll be better off with me than with that solemn fellow with the theatrical name. I say, Wyedale, I've just been saying to your sister that I hope you'll console yourself for the loss of your shooting partner by coming to Dunerlacht for the 'Twelfth;' and the longer you can stay the better I'll be pleased."

It is needless to say that Tom joyfully accepted. And his sister, feeling that she had acquitted herself brilliantly with the papa, crossed the room, like a coruscation of sunbeams, to fascinate the daughter.

CHAPTER VIII.

With that young lady Tom had, indeed, made but a lame appearance, from the point of view of a suitor consciously commencing a siege. There is nothing like an *arrière-pensée*, at least in the case of minds tolerably ingenuous, for blunting the conversational faculties, freezing the ideas, and letting loose in talk all that surface *débris* which hangs about all minds, and does duty for ideas with stupid people. There is nothing, therefore, that for the moment so completely levels the clever man with the idiot as an *arrière-pensée*. Tom was, of course, labouring under this disability, and with circumstances of aggravation, for he could hardly bring himself to look upon the *arrière-pensée* as his own property. It was part of a game of his sister's, which, rather sulkily and with a half heart, he was helping her to play. Such is gratitude; but hence he felt doubly numb and stupid. It

is doubtful whether Tom, though an Englishman, had ever talked about the weather, as a necessity, before. Now, however, he atoned for past neglect of that pathetic subject, and handled it with the length and insistance which enthusiasts bestow upon a fresh topic.

Esmé, who had heard him converse before, and always with a sort of bright spontaneity that broke out upon all sorts of topics, fancied at first that this atmospheric attack was merely a bit of fun and irony, and expected for some time the development of the joke. In vain. Through many a dreary period, the vicissitudes of the barometer were canvassed; and though he went conscientiously round the dial, he made, as sailors say, "bad weather of it" all round. Somehow, at last, Cosmo Glencairn's name was introduced; and Tom, finding a subject with which he was familiar, and a listener whose interest seemed to awaken, fastened upon it, and flashed into eloquence upon the theme. *Apropos* of what, he knew not, but away he went at score upon Cosmo's merits. He really liked him, and cherished—what might seem strange in such a nature—a carefully-concealed respect for a character so different from his own, and for ways of

life and thought which he dimly felt to be higher and better than his own. Now this feeling had free voice. Tom was not conscious of giving a biography of his friend; nor was he conscious that an occasional suggestive remark, or trifling query, led him, in effect, to do so. His fun rather came back to him, and his biographical essay took a serio-comic turn; but as there was nothing about Cosmo, except perhaps an occasional excess of earnestness, to which ridicule could really attach, the good-natured satire only imparted that flavour of dispraise necessary to make panegyric palatable to human nature, which abhors unqualified perfection. Esmè did not conceal her interest.

> "These things to hear
> Did Desdemona seriously incline;"

and, on being told of Cosmo's itinerations in the pursuit of self-culture, she declared that they displayed a kind of zeal and thoroughness that were to be envied, and a dash of romance and picturesqueness which transformed the dry and dusty paths to knowledge into ways of poetic beauty and delight.

"What an ideal life!" she cried; "how enviable he is to wish to lead it, and then to be able to do what he wishes!"

"Is *that* the sort of life *you* would like to lead?" asked Tom.

"If I were fit for it; but I am afraid I should not persevere. Mr Glencairn has actually persevered in it for several years."

"Yes, he has been on the prowl for about three years."

"Magnificent!"

Tom laughed loudly.

"It is not *your* ideal life, then?"

Tom laughed still more heartily. "No, Miss Douglas; I'm afraid it would bore me to extinction. I should be like the pilgrim walking to Mecca or Jerusalem with peas in his shoes."

"Yet you and Mr Glencairn are great friends."

"Yes, we are; and the funniest thing of all is, not that I like him, but that he likes me."

"Well, but is it not quite proverbial that men of talent——" here Esmè broke down, blushing to find herself on the brink of an involuntary rudeness, but recovering rapidly, said, "I believe I was about to say something very stupid. Where is Mr Glencairn going to next?"

"I really don't know. I was in hopes he was going to content himself with Scotland for the autumn; but he was in one of his moods yester-

day afternoon, and spoke of setting out for fifty different points of the compass instead."

"I think Mr Glencairn said he was very fond of Scotland?"

"Oh yes—immensely fond of it; but then, when a fellow once fancies he has 'a mission,' he takes to thwarting himself and friends in the most deplorable way."

"What is Mr Glencairn's mission?"

"Heaven only knows. I believe he is still hunting for it."

"He will find it if he is so much in earnest; and when he finds it he will likely fulfil it. Don't you think so?"

"I daresay he will. In the meantime he threatens to run through my mission."

"Your mission, Mr Wyedale? Pray, what is that?"

"Oh, my views are lowly; for the autumn my mission was to shoot with him at Finmore."

"And that is not to be?"

"I fear not; but Lord Germistoune's kindness in asking me to shoot at Dunerlacht quite makes up for the disappointment, if my friend does break down — more than makes up for it."

"I fear we shall not be able to compensate

you for the loss of your friend's society; we are very dull and stupid people at Dunerlacht."

"But *you* will be there?" said Tom, suddenly mindful of the *rôle* he ought to be playing.

"Oh yes; we shall be at home, naturally."

"Then—then I don't think I shall miss Cosmo much."

Miss Douglas opened her eyes a little at this rather straight plunge of Tom's, and said, "I am afraid you are too sanguine, Mr Wyedale. But I hope you won't have to depend for your society exclusively on papa and me. I believe we are to have, for us, quite a large party this year."

Tom was off at once on the wings of fancy to the moors. "What splendid shooting it must be!" he said; "and, by the by, Miss Douglas, have you any idea how they work the duck on the lake? There is a tremendous margin of sedge. I looked down at it once from the high-road. Punts would be the only plan. Are there punts?"

"I really can't tell you, Mr Wyedale. I'm not at all a sportswoman."

"Ah! I'm afraid if there were punts you would be certain to know; don't you think so? I suspect there can't be punts. I wonder if Lord Germistoune has ever thought of them?"

"I'm afraid I'm quite ignorant of all shooting matters."

"That lake has immense capabilities, Miss Douglas. I wouldn't go in for big swivel-guns, you know — that's not my idea of sport; but without some sort of punt the lake must be wasted—absolutely squandered. With a punt I would undertake to make the ducks reflect to any extent."

"Then for your sake, if not for the ducks, I hope there *is* a punt."

"One might rig up something of the sort simply enough, to be sure. Glencairn and I once managed the business that way on one of the big Canadian lakes. We made a sort of raft, you know, and fenced it round with sedge and scrub, so that it looked like a floating island."

"Did you make the Canadian ducks reflect?"

"Yes; I suspect they won't forget us and our raft in a hurry. We slated them."

"Is Mr Glencairn a good shot?"

"Excellent. He does everything he *does* do well."

"I suppose he is always in earnest about everything he does?"

"That's the secret, perhaps. It would bore

me, now, to be in earnest about anything, except, of course, sport, and" (observing his sister's suggestive eye upon him)—"and, of course, one or two other serious matters."

Esmè laughed. "I wonder," she said, "what you would rank with sport as serious matters?"

"Hang it!" thought Tom, "she's laughing at me; I'm on the wrong tack somehow,"—but he jerked out a sentence to the effect that "for every man there is something sacred and serious," and then remembering immortal Mr Guppy and his refrain, "There *are* chords," had wellnigh broken down.

"So that you *have* profited by Mr Glencairn's society; you are not altogether an unworthy disciple," laughed Esmè.

"Disciple? God forbid! I'm not a disciple at all. I wouldn't go in for Glencairn's line of business for the world. Life is too short."

"Still for every man there is something sacred and serious—you are convinced of that?" said Esmè, with profound gravity.

"Oh, of course I am, and—and—all that kind of thing, you know." Then their eyes met, and they both went off into hearty fits of laughter.

"I have always understood," thought Tom, "that if a woman once laughs at you, you may

as well cry 'off' at once, and throw up the sponge. Now, this girl *is* laughing at me—and small blame to her; and I feel that, if I were ever so much in love with her, I couldn't get on the proper tack—not to-day, at least. I suspect after dinner would be my only chance. I believe moonlight has a wonderful effect upon the female nature; and dry champagne (in sufficient quantities) has almost made *me* sentimental once or twice. Yes, I *must* try it some other time, under more favourable circumstances. At present I can't score, that's clear." Then, seeing his sister cross the room, he rose and said, "I must go and sound Lord Germistoune about the punts." And thus ended the first scene of Tom's little drama, "L'Amoureux malgré lui."

And then came Mrs Ravenhall, and, with full confidence in her social versatility, approached the task of fascinating Esmè, of whom she knew nothing, except that she was a very young undergraduate in London life. And very charming she made herself, in a bright, genial, cheery way, that could not but be acceptable to any well-conditioned nature. But as a skilful tactician behind his skirmishers watches to detect the points at which the enemy may most readily be open to impression, so, from behind

her sunny smiles and gay *espiéglerie*, peered forth the intent worldling, striving to decipher the character of the young lady before her. The Highlanders at Prestonpans, and the Maories rushing from their "pahs," disconcerted regular troops by their unsophisticated method of dealing with conventional modes of attack and defence; and, to a person entirely conventional, there is probably nothing more indecipherable than a character which, supposing it not to be commonplace, displays only the colour of its own individuality, and reflects none of the stereotyped features of manner, thought, and so forth, which belong to some one or other of the various social coteries lying within the ken of the conventional observer. In this way Esmè somewhat puzzled Mrs Ravenhall. Her simplicity and candour would have been easily comprehended, but, blended with a straightforward shrewdness and keenness of insight, and a certain independence of thought, they were, on the whole, paradoxical. And then, although nothing could be more remote from her nature than affected *nonchalance* and strong-minded idiosyncrasies, there was in her a strange ignorance of, indifference to, even a want of reverence for, persons, things, and ways of life that are sacred and canonical to people,

the final cause of whose existence it is to be in the best society.

And thus, when Mrs Ravenhall settled down for a cosy talk, and unfolded the usual staples of cosy conversation among people of her stamp and class, she experienced a series of shocks. It seemed so startling to be called upon to explain who was who at every sentence. Extremes meet; and a kinship is established between Belgravia and the backwoods, by this one touch of nature, that the denizens of either paradise, in conversing with outsiders — that is to say, with the world at large — assume, with primeval simplicity, that, to all the world, the inhabitants of their little *monde*, and all that is done, said, or thought therein, are matters of familiar knowledge. Among the redskins, "Hooker Jim's" squaw will dilate to you, by the hour, upon "Horny-eyed Houlaoua's" infamous conduct to *his* squaw and papooses, and all the outs and ins of the difficulties between "Hairy Samky" and "Wingery Bong," as if these nature's nobles and their deeds were known as the sun, moon, and stars.

And, exactly in the same way, you will be muddled, puzzled, driven half-crazy among the fine ladies and gentlemen of the *crême de la*

crême and (*nota bene*) their *umbras* — if you happen to be an outsider. For you will have imputed to you, and expected of you, a complete familiarity with the attributes, connections, daily lives, and excruciating nicknames of those who live, and move, and have their being in the fashionable microcosm, though the renown of them has never reached your darkling orbit. There is something fresh, child-like, and almost touching in this, when it is an attribute of aboriginal simplicity; but when you regard it as a trait of British high-breeding, "*risum teneatis amici?*" The word "British" is used advisedly and with emphasis: for against this result of a profound yet parochial egotism, the well-bred Russian is protected by his cosmopolitanism; the Frenchman by his accuracy; the German by his matter-of-factness; and the Italian by that delightful outcome of a national character filtered through countless generations of breeding,—that captivating and gracious gift of sympathy which adorns him and helps to make him what he is—the best bred and most lovable of men.

Pardon the digression, and let us return to Mrs Ravenhall, who, stamped in all respects with the pattern of her *monde*, awoke, with a series of shocks, to the fact that Esmè was

something very like a pagan. She was positively ignorant of the habits of Mrs Chesterfield Beauregard? She knew nothing to the discredit of Lady Diana Potiphar. She hadn't even heard that the Hon. and Rev. Joseph Jellyfish had been quite exculpated by the Bishop. Then, as for the exploits of Donjie St Bees, they were a sealed letter for her; and the witticisms of Jam Haverel (actually of JAM Haverel!) a closed book. Was it possible that she was in ignorance of what went on that night at Drawem Castle?—that night, you know, when the Duchess of Groats lost £2000 at *écarté?* and Lady Mabilia Fantod danced *such* a funny dance at the top of the staircase with the Marquis de Saut-du-Loup? What! not know about *that* night when Algie Montfort behaved so shockingly to Prince von Pickelhauben?—put a tame fox in the Prince's bed, you know, so that the Prince's lower limbs were terribly lacerated, and he couldn't go to Doncaster for the Leger—and that, of course, was the very Leger which entirely ruined poor Pix Puffinson. How foolish, by the by, of Pix to go off with Lady Wallsend, when he *knew* he had nothing, and she had nothing! No wonder Lady Anne was furious; and really, what the dear Duke said about poor Pix

was only what he deserved — don't you think so? But ah! by the by, you don't know anything about any of them. Then genealogies— Abraham begat Isaac, &c., &c., &c. Such and suchlike subjects could not, as Mrs Ravenhall found, be employed as a means of amusing and fascinating Esmè, or of testing the points of view from which she looked out upon life and the world. If you never talk about anything but yourself, your neighbours and their affairs, it is difficult, upon occasion, to have recourse to abstract subjects; and Mrs Ravenhall was in that predicament. However, with a rapid change of front, she abandoned the Donjies, and the Algies, and the Pixes, and the Dukes and Duchesses, as meat too strong for this weakling babe, and did her best to be charming on "certain things in general;" and, with a good deal of froth and gush and sunbeam, she contrived to make herself felt to be what a young man would have called a "very jolly woman," and what a well-ordered damsel would describe as "so good-natured, and bright, and merry."

"You must let me see a great deal of you, dear Miss Douglas," she said, at last; "we have no friends here, and you must really patronise us as much as you can. We want rest, repose,

sunshine, quiet amusement. Do help us. We must do things together. Now promise to be our *cicerone*."

Then Esmè promised to do her best, though disclaiming local knowledge.

"Oh, but," cried Mrs Ravenhall, taking her cue from one or two chance remarks of Esmè's —"oh, but my brother Tom tells me you are a wonderful artist, and so accomplished and clever."

"I wonder how Mr Wyedale discovered all these perfections!" said Esmè.

"Oh, Tom doesn't say much, but he sees a great deal — very clearly Tom sees. Such a shrewd judge of character, too, he is; and *such* an admirer of everything beautiful,—a fanatic about scenery and art—quite a fanatic, I protest."

Remembering Tom's recent conversation and tolerably frank account of himself, Esmè felt there was something about this fanaticism which required explanation—in fact, that there must be a mistake somewhere. She said nothing, however; and Mrs Ravenhall, having uttered a few more valedictory sweetnesses, clasping Esmè's hand with one of hers, and softly patting it with the other, finally took her leave.

"Come away, Tom," she said — "we must not waste more of Lord Germistoune's valuable time; and I know you will never think of moving if I don't actually carry you off. Come," —and they went, with many mutual resolves, heartily expressed, to "do things together," and see much of each other.

"Well, Tom?" said his sister, as they walked down the avenue.

"Well, *Lucy?*" replied Tom, with an emphasis that implied that any revelations that had to be made ought to come from her side.

"Well, she is nice and pretty."

"Nothing fresher to communicate?"

"She rather puzzles me."

"Does she? She rather frightens *me*—in my new capacity, that is—— But what perplexes you, Lucy?"

"I can't quite tell you. She knows nothing of the world—of our world, which ought to be hers—and yet she is not like a raw, country girl. She doesn't seem to know that she knows nothing of the world; or, at all events, she sees nothing to regret in her ignorance. And then she is quite self-possessed. I'm afraid she has character and originality. I'm almost afraid she's a sort of girl who thinks for herself."

"How shocking! But, after all, why shouldn't she, if it amuses her?"

"Well, you know, all that sort of thing is not in your favour. I had hoped to find a page with no writing on it, ready to be written over by the first moderately skilful hand that made the attempt; but she is not *that*. I had expected a little blushing rose of the wilderness; but she is not *that*."

"How oratorical! Well, you think that the rose is not for my button-hole, nor the page destined to receive my autograph?"

"I don't say that; but the situation is quite different from what I expected. The difficulties are with you, however. What I fear is, not that you can't succeed—for you can, if you try—but that you won't take trouble, won't persevere. You have a part to play, and you must play it. You must study it — adapt your style, tone, and sentiment; and, above all things, be in earnest. I am sure she is truly lovable."

"So am I. She will have twenty or thirty thousand a-year."

"And do give up that hard way of talking. It grows upon people till it becomes mechanical. It is exactly the sort of tone that won't suit

Miss Douglas. How did you get on with her just now? What did you talk about?"

"I didn't get on well, that's certain. I think she was inclined to laugh at me."

"Surely you didn't say anything premature?"

"No, no; but I was self-conscious, and a self-conscious man always makes an ass of himself."

"What did you talk about?"

"I'll be hanged if I know! Yes, by the by, I think it was principally about Cosmo Glencairn."

"What! the man who's here?"

"Yes; he has been in your house two or three times—dined with you, I fancy—certainly been at your balls."

"Oh, I remember him very well; pleasant, isn't he?"

"Tremendously."

"But what does she know about him?"

"Knows *all* about him *now*. I've told her all about him; quite exhausted the subject. Besides, she's met him two or three times here."

"But what possessed you to talk about *him?*"

"Well, I was short of subjects, and Cosmo was the only one that seemed to fetch her. I tried her with various topics, but somehow we

always drifted back to Cosmo. We had a little round about duck-shooting, but even that turned into Cosmo. To tell you the truth, he was rather a godsend to me."

"What a goose you are, Tom!"

"Thanks; if you had said so half an hour ago when I was among the ducks, I would have agreed with you heartily."

"Is Mr Glencairn a marrying man? He is very handsome, and clever, and rich."

"No; I've told you already he is *not* a marrying man: and if you are jealous of him on my account, calm yourself. Old Germistoune has taken a dislike to him, and has been rude and bearish; and Cosmo's soul is in arms. He won't go near the place again."

"Oh! that matters nothing, if *she* is interested in him."

"Tut, Lucy, how earnest you are! What can it matter if he doesn't think of her or see her?"

"You can't be too careful. Remember how much depends on your making the most of such an opportunity. His lordship is a terrible old bore."

"Isn't he? But he has redeeming points."

"Oh, of course; he is a thorough old aristocrat."

"And he has the best mixed shooting in Scotland."

"There you go! You must ingratiate yourself with him."

"It is done. His lordship has the clear-seeing eye towards me."

"Don't neglect him then."

"I won't—I won't."

"You must woo him almost as much as his daughter."

"I will—I will. Concealment shall not prey on my damask cheek."

"By the by, you'd better dine with us to-day, and bring Mr Glencairn. I must investigate him."

"Certainly, provided the legislatorial head is sound again. Frank with a headache is fit company neither for man nor beast."

"Oh, his head will be quite well by dinner-time."

"*Va bene!*"

CHAPTER IX.

The dinner-party did not come off, however; or, rather, it did not include Cosmo. When his friend went to look for him he found that he had started early in the morning and crossed the lake; and from this solitary excursion he did not return till the evening was far advanced. The truth is, that sleep had brought no refreshment either to his body or his mind. He awoke with the perplexities of the previous day weighing heavily on his spirit; aggravated, indeed, by daylight. If the mystic moon had for a moment charmed to sleep some of his troubles, the realistic sun roused them again into vigorous action. "Hide me from day's garish eye," is a prayer which finds an echo in all heavy hearts. Thus, to Cosmo, in his present mood, while movement was an alleviation, solitude was a necessity; and so, long before the world of luxury was astir, he had risen

and passed away across the lake, and up among the hills beyond, seeking, as by an instinct, some place of silence and shade, somewhat apart from men, a little sheltered from the intolerable joyousness of the summer morning. There, wandering to and fro, among the woods and rocks, he took up the thread of his last night's meditations. The gloomy train of his thoughts moved round and round in a monotonous circle. He arraigned, and after leading evidence, he condemned himself. From whatever point of view he looked at his past history and present position, he saw that he was "an unprofitable servant." If Hope and Commonsense suggested that twenty-eight years, though a great age, are still not exactly man's allotted span, and that there might yet be time to atone for past shortcomings, he straightway found himself wandering in a labyrinth of projects, each in its nature wide asunder as the poles from all the rest, and each to be rejected in turn as not the path to take. Now it was his own incompetency that seemed to bar the way; now it was the inadequacy of the end to be attained that warned him back. Underlying all his mental conflicts there was a feverish restlessness, new to his experience, which led

him to turn to many unreasonable projects, and finally, to reject all projects, reasonable or the reverse. He said to himself that it was a sphere of active and at least useful exertion which he had to find. He said it languidly, but his thoughts travelled over a sufficiently large area in the quest.

In this age there are many outlets for restlessness—sanctioned, almost sanctified, by science. The sources of the Nile are still to discover, the North Pole has not yet been reached; and, besides these great standing challenges of Nature, there is always something inviting scientific Bohemianism to distant and uncomfortable regions for purposes of discovery or observation. One or two of these, in vogue at the time, suggested themselves to Cosmo. But missionary zeal in the cause of science would not be roused. He felt, indeed, that his scientific attainments were too weak to justify or support such high-pressure action, and so he was off at a tangent in an opposite direction—a direction which showed how abnormal was his state of mind. For it was to the Carlist war he turned. Fiercely in progress then, it seemed to promise a career of romance and adventure—an opening for one who could play the part of a guerilla leader. There was

much to touch the imagination in such a life. Ah! but a career of romance and adventure! Was this his quest? No. His quest was a sphere of active and useful exertion. The service of Don Carlos was an active enough sphere, but was it useful? Was it not even dishonourable, as far as he could be concerned in it? Don Carlos was not his king, nor the Catholic faith his faith. To join the Carlists, therefore, would practically be to turn filibuster and renegade. A score of similarly wild projects were similarly canvassed and dismissed, and, with them, many others more practicable. Among the rest, two, which, as alternatives, had all along been, more or less vaguely, the horizon of promise to which he looked, and these were the careers of literature and politics. But, to-day, by the morbid play of Cosmo's thoughts, they were associated, on terms of equality, with the most chimerical projects, and dismissed with almost equal *brusquerie.*

By what right could he address himself in earnest to the career of letters? What had he to say to the world? Could he teach it anything? He had read, indeed, and travelled much, and even thought a little. So had others. He had no *spécialité.* Were not his thoughts

but commonplace deductions from the commonplace experiences of a mediocre man? Could he amuse the world, then? There was an incongruousness about the idea to-day that almost made him smile.

Well, then, politics. Here, indeed, he had earnest opinions and convictions, a fine ideal of what English political life ought to be, and of the *rationale* of English statesmanship. He had often dreamt of a political career for himself—often, indeed, awaking from his dream to see that his aspirations, when compared with the actual spirit of the age, would involve what the spirit of the age would jeer at as a political Utopia. But to-day he had eyes for nothing but the imperfections of our system. He could see nothing but a selfish unpatriotic democratism on one side—on the other, a tentative spirit of stop-gap and compromise; and between the two, the chaotic mass of the general body politic, steeped in morbid lethargy, and only roused into occasional spasms of passion by a detestable system of agitation. Before these conditions he recoiled to-day. Real heroism ought not to be deterred by the dangers and difficulties confronting it. But to-day Cosmo's heroism slept; he felt paralysed before the dead and stony as-

pect of English political life, and turned from the subject, as he had often done before, muttering—

> "Dreamer of dreams born out of my due time!
> Why should I strive to set the crooked straight?"

In all his musings of to-day, with the ostensible purpose above recorded, Cosmo was now and then conscious of a half-heartedness in his investigations, and conscious, at last, that the real reason why he rejected every outlet was a conviction that there *was* nothing at all in the way of personal achievement that was worth undertaking, whether for the mere sake of effort, or for the end that might be attained.

Others might do better than he what had to be done. If they did not, it did not signify; if he remained unproductive, it would not signify; if he blossomed into achievement, it could not signify. Nothing did, would, or could signify. After hours of mental struggle and perturbation, this lugubrious conclusion seemed to be the one point definitely reached.

At last, exhausted and oppressed with the heat of the drowsy afternoon, he fell asleep upon the ground, and pursuing through slumber the tenor of his waking thoughts, he dreamt that he lay in the first circle of Dante's "Inferno;" and with this addition to the sufferings of those who

dwelt therein, that whereas they had Desire without Hope, in him Hope and Desire were alike dead. It was twilight when he awoke—twilight in the sky, but night in the coppice where he lay; and, as he started to his feet, the illusion of his dream was still upon him. Every tree about his resting-place was one of that weird Dantean forest of a lower circle; and the sound of the evening breeze stirring the foliage, the eternal burthen of lamenting souls.

"A dismal dream!" he exclaimed, as the world of reality forced itself upon him; "and from evil dreams how often one awakes to cry, 'Thank God! a dream and nothing more!' but now, now, to what do I awake? I might as well be in the 'Inferno' as here, in the upper air, with no purpose in my life; with hope and energy, and even the wish to do, eclipsed and paralysed. Great heavens! what has happened to me? Can I be going mad?"

With such thoughts he slowly descended the hill in the direction of the lake, and finding his boat where he had left it in the morning, embarked and made for home.

By the time he reached the middle of the lake the moon had risen, and was bathing the further shore in light; and here, by some sudden im-

pulse, he changed the direction of his boat, and steered straight for the Villa Bianca, which gleamed forth conspicuously from its dark background of wooded hill.

With eyes fixed on the villa, he crossed the lake in deep abstraction,—so deep that he would have run his boat on the rocky promontory at the end of the villa garden, had not the overhanging rocks suddenly shut the house from his view, and thus aroused him. Then he ordered the boatman to stop. From this point nothing was visible to him in front but the miniature precipice which rounded off the peninsular domain lakewards. Over all the face of this, wild flowers grew in luxuriance, and on one white cluster, which broke the sky-line on the topmost ledge, and caught the moonlight, Cosmo fixed his eyes. Presently he was seized with a caprice—like the caprice of one in a dream—to possess himself of the flowers; and in a few seconds the rock was scaled, the prize was made, and he was turning to descend, when the sound of a guitar from the adjacent shrubbery arrested him. After a few tinkling notes of prelude, a voice began to sing. He had never heard Esmè's singing voice before, but, at the first notes, he knew that she was the singer. Every tone seemed to

strike straight into his inmost heart, stirring it with intense vibrations, which sent through all his being a message of revelation. Her voice was full of pathos, and the song she sang—a pensive air to words of tender melancholy—broke the stillness of the hour with an effect that would have charmed any listener. As for Cosmo, he was spell-bound. Dimly conscious, at first, of the strangeness, even the impropriety, of his position, he could not move. As Ferdinand might not choose but follow Ariel's pilot-strain which called him to "these yellow sands," and led him to Miranda, even so was Cosmo bound to the spot where Esmè's voice enthralled him. The song was succeeded by another and another, and still he remained motionless, not reasoning at all, scarcely thinking as it seemed—only receiving, as the thirsty ground drinks in the dew, an overwhelming sense of new and mysterious beatitude. At last the music ceased altogether; then there was a sound of footsteps, and in a moment the involuntary eavesdropper stood face to face with the fair singer. Esmè was somewhat startled at first by the apparition of a man standing on the ledge, as if he had suddenly risen from the lake; but, recognising Cosmo, she recovered her self-possession at once, and said gaily—

"Oh, Mr Glencairn! I am relieved to find you are only an earthly eavesdropper after all. I feared it might be some outraged spirit of music risen from the lake to rebuke my discord, for I *was* singing very flat, I know."

Cosmo could say nothing.

"Pray," said Esmè, as he continued silent, "how did you come here?"

Cosmo roused himself with an effort and said —"I must apologise for the intrusion, Miss Douglas; I assure you it was quite involuntary."

"Please don't suppose I am going to scold you as a trespasser. I only wished to know how you came here, for you certainly did not pass me."

"No, I came from the lake."

"From the lake?"

"Yes;" and then, with a desperate effort to appear unconscious and gay, he added—"You know the legend of the Lurleiberg, and how the music of the Lörelei drew all passers-by towards the rock where she sang? Well, the Rhine drama has been reproduced on Lake Como; only that I am more fortunate than my predecessors. I have escaped the 'Gewirre,' I have reached the top of the rock, and I am talking to the nymph!"

"I don't think you pay a compliment either to Lurline's music or your own taste, though you can hardly expect me to feel flattered; but, seriously, you could not hear my voice from the lake?"

"Well, to speak truly, I must abandon the Lörelei myth. No, I did not hear your voice from the lake. I was rowing past here, and was seized with a strong desire to steal these wild flowers. I did steal them, as you see, and then I was going, but you began to sing. I hope you will forgive me for staying; I would have gone if I could, but it was impossible. You *must* forgive me, for it was your own fault."

"Forgive, Mr Glencairn? it was very flattering of you to care to stay to hear my very humble performance. If I had known," she added, laughing,—"if I had known that I had an audience, I would have tried to do better—that is, if I had not run away, which is more probable; but if I *had* stayed, I would certainly have chosen other songs—more cheerful ones."

"I am glad you didn't; I could have wished for nothing different. I shall never forget my stolen happiness. I could have wished for no other songs."

"But do you like sad songs, then?"

"To-night no others would have pleased me."

"I hope that does not mean that you are unhappy to-night?"

There was a strange agitation in Cosmo's manner, and Esmè let the words slip involuntarily, and had no sooner spoken than she repented of having done so.

"I cannot pretend to say that I am happy to-night, Miss Douglas," was the reply, uttered in a voice of the deepest gloom.

"I am very sorry. Has anything serious happened? Is some one ill? or—— but forgive me, I am very rude; I have no right to question you."

"It is I who should ask forgiveness, and also correct myself. I cannot think that it would be possible to be unhappy in Miss Douglas's society; and if I have been unhappy all day, I have been more than happy since I landed on this enchanted territory,—enchanted truly, has it seemed to me," he added, as if thinking aloud.

"Ah, Mr Glencairn! I shall really think you are mocking my poor music, if you pay it so many compliments."

"The music—the music! but was it only the music? was it——"

"I daresay the moonlight, and all the summer night's delights, have had much more to do with the enchantment."

"All the summer night's delights! all! so many, so many! I——"

"Where have you been to-day, Mr Glencairn?" said Esmè, changing the subject abruptly, embarrassed by his strange manner, *distrait* air, and way of speech. "We saw Mr Wydelale on the lake this evening, and he was full of serio-comic alarm at what he called your 'mysterious disappearance.'"

"I? oh! I have been away beyond Lake Lecco."

"All day?"

"All day."

"And alone?"

"Yes, alone; I found my own society more than enough."

"Ah! you have quarrelled with yourself and not made it up, and that saddens you naturally."

"Perhaps that is what it is—it is very nearly true; but if I were to tell you exactly what has saddened me, you would certainly laugh at me."

"No, no; indeed, I am sure I should not."

"I will tell you then," he said, breaking out with sudden energy. "I awoke yesterday and realised the fact that I was dreaming in a fool's paradise. I awoke yesterday to find that all my life has been little better than a sleep and a dream. I awoke yesterday and saw that I who began life anxious for effort, full of aspirations, I, under pretext of preparation for life's work, am spending what ought to be my harvest-time in still sowing the seed and fancifully dressing the soil. Life is so short that, if we do not observe the proportions of its seasons and allot to each its work, life will be barren. It is not in winter that we make our harvests. I saw this clearly yesterday; to-day, I see it still more clearly. I have had such awakenings before, and felt energy, impulse, eager desire, to begin a new course; but to-day, energy and impulse are paralysed. I fell asleep to-day in a wood, and dreamt I was in the first circle of the 'Inferno;' I awoke and felt that my waking life was worse than my dream. I seemed not only not to descry the new way of life I had desired, but no longer to have any desire to find it. Is not this to be unhappy? to be truly miserable? To-night —now—I begin to know, to see things which, —but, Miss Douglas, what egotism is all this!

Pardon me. I have no right to inflict these confidences upon you,—morbid fancies they must seem—remorseful groans of a moonstruck idler."

"No, no; believe me I am interested—though it is very sad. But now you have some new expedient, some new plan. Mr Wyedale told me a great deal about your—about your—travels; and I thought,—but, well, I hope your new plan will be successful. I am quite certain that it will."

"Thanks, Miss Douglas; but I have no new plan. I only see—no matter! Indeed the only plan I have is to leave this to-morrow."

"To-morrow? that is a new intention, is it not?"

"Yes, it was formed to-night, not many minutes since. And now farewell. May I take these flowers? I had stolen them already, you will say; but I should like to take them with your permission."

"Surely they are not worth asking for?"

"I assure you I think they are."

"Then, as lady of the manor, I give them to you freely."

"I shall preserve them as a souvenir of to-night—and—and *you*. Good-bye."

"Is this a final 'good-bye'?"

"I am afraid it is."

"Perhaps you will be merciful to poor Mr Wyedale and come to the Highlands after all; if so, I hope you will be able to tell me that the new way is found, and the journey on it smooth and prosperous."

"If I have your good wishes, it is much."

"You have my best wishes. Good-bye."

"Farewell."

In that exquisite poem, "Atalanta's Race," the hero, Milanion, after passing a night of prayer and vigil in the temple of Aphrodité, is roused from the sleep which has at last overtaken him by an actual manifestation of the divinity before whose statue he has been pouring his supplications. In her glorious presence he sees nought "for dazzling light that round him shone."

> "He staggered with his arms outspread,
> Delicious unnamed odours breathed around,
> For languid happiness he bowed his head."

And some such condition was Cosmo's, when, after a prelude of sweetest music, Esmè stood before him. She stood before him in a new light now. The revelation to his spirit was as complete and instantaneous as that to Milanion's eyes. He, too, had been prepared for an apocalypse by a vigil and an agony.

The time had come for him—as come it probably must for all, even the most intellectual—to discover that the aims, delights, and prizes of intellect are insufficient, and that, from another side of our nature, claims to have its share in our attention recognised are advanced with such a violence of impetuosity as to bear down, and cast into at least a temporary eclipse, the rival which till now had monopolised all our interest. And this? What is it? It is the demand which one nature makes for the interchange with another nature of something which the word "sympathy" but faintly expresses. It is the need to *give*, and to *receive*, an absolute devotion—so absolute that the two natures may become like the complementary parts of a single being, the disunion of which brings mortal anguish to both. As the soul of music slumbered in the shell till quickened by the breath of ethereal inspiration, so, deep in the recesses of our nature, lies this capacity of need to receive and to bestow, till, late or soon, the energising influence reaches it with the sudden impulse of electricity, and it is roused, and we awake in the dawn of a new life. It is a dawn of fiery clouds and puzzling lights, and at first the spirit is only oppressed by a sense of be-

wilderment, or tortured by a vague numb pain, the source of which is shrouded in mystery. This is the dawn, the birth of love. The electric spark may spring from the witchery of a single glance, which has no witchery save only for one; from the music of a tone, which is mere dull sound for all the world besides; from a hundred things that may have fallen like passing sunbeams, leaving no impression on the many, but which are winged arrows of revelation and destiny to the devoted ONE.

There was no longer any mystery. Cosmo now saw the cause of his unrest. A long-cherished ideal, built on the slight foundation of a painter's graceful fancy, had passed from the world of phantasms, had come as a living woman, and captivated all his being. The revelation had been sudden, almost as if the work of magic; and all the strange mental phases of the last two days had been due to the overwhelming force of an emotion hitherto unfelt, and to the bewilderment of a mind seeking the cause of its trouble in every quarter save that whence it really came. Error on such a point may seem incredible; but the morbid watchfulness which Cosmo exercised over the growth of his intellectual life had developed a tendency to

accesses of self-distrust and self-accusation, and to occasional recurrences of an almost despairing conviction that his life was destined to pass in laborious preparations only. This conviction—logical enough in view of Cosmo's system, which comprehended something like universal preparedness—always led to a feverish search for a way of escape into action. But, hitherto, the fever of search had exhausted itself or been quieted by the fastidious verdict, that for that to which the search had conducted him he was not, as yet, "prepared." All his mental troubles being thus connected with this subject, and all accidental depressions taking this colour, it was, after all, not wonderful that the first tumults of a great and unknown passion should fail to be recognised in their true character—a great and unknown passion the force of which is often measured by the self-depreciation of its victims. But now they were recognised. Full on his mind and heart blazed the conviction of Esmè's infinite graces. In a few moments he seemed to see and to connect, one with another, every trait and feature of mind and body which, in three or four brief interviews, had passed under his observation. All seemed to him beautiful, harmonious, unusual, and complete. Sublimated by

his imagination, her perfections matched—nay they overpasssed—those, which, in his day-dreams, he had attributed to such a woman as the painter had delineated. Thus she fulfilled his dream and more; for she had a thousand other charms, all summed up in the one irrational, but *only* true, reason for loving—she was *herself*.

Are such things possible? it may be asked—such volcanic action in the minds of reasonable beings?—possible, above all, in the case of such a man as Cosmo seems to pretend to be? Yes, we reply; above all, in the case of such men as Cosmo. His heart had not been deadened by a series of transitory impressions, nor had the fineness of his sensibility and his perceptions been blunted by a sensual way of life. Fastidiousness had protected him from the former evil—purity, refinement, and perhaps it must be owned, intellectualism, had held him from the latter; and so now this, the first real impression which woman had ever made upon his heart and mind, addressed itself to capabilities which awoke, for the first time, with the freshness of youth and the vigour of manhood combined.

Cosmo had in truth, though unconsciously, been in the attitude attributed by a sweet singer

to one waiting for his ideal, when he exclaims—

> "Whenever she comes she will find me ready
> To do her homage, my queen ! my queen ! "

And now she had come; and the "longer" he had waited, the fuller and readier his homage.

The vigil was over, the preparation was complete, when Cosmo reached the summit of the rock, and at the first notes of Esmè's voice the revelation was made. She had come. At first the *pain* of love, which springs from the disproportion between longing and hope—the one infinite, the other so cramped by the exaggeration of obstacles—at first this pain was unfelt. He was in a trance of delight, in which pain was impossible. His untutored heart, smitten with a force which it could not control, answered promptly to the shock. Words of love and homage half rose to his lips, and longed for utterance. His secret would have betrayed itself to an expert before it had been many minutes consciously in his own possession; even to Esmè, perhaps, had not her perception of his strange manner led her instinctively to an abrupt change of subject, which recalled him sharply for the moment from the world of delicious dreams.

Then, as by a lightning-flash, he beheld his position—its danger, its hopelessness, and, as an immediate consequence, the necessity for flight, as instantly announced.

But yet, again, as he went home over the bright waters, the glamour of dreamland fell upon him. For him, again, it was as though from amidst the confusions of a raving tempest one clear strain of ineffable music had arisen—a harmony of power that subdued to its own theme, and absorbed into itself, every other sound, steeping the soul of the listener in a sense of beauty and repose. The forms of external things were scarcely noted by him; but he saw that everything was good. His thought was of her alone; and the "light of the thought," playing upon all the world, clothed it in hues that belong to some better world than this.

Reveries such as these, consciously indulged in, hurry the dreamer, at lightning pace, along a path of spells and enchantments, at the end of which he is seized by a real power, and riveted in real fetters. Cosmo, again in the narrow solitude of his own chamber, fancied that he awoke before that point had been reached. Be that as it may, he completely recognised the situation into which he was drifting. He accused

himself frankly, and admitted the impeachment, with a sort of desperate calmness.

"I am falling in love," he said. "That which has befooled wiser and stronger men is beginning to throw its glamour over me;" and then the tenor of his thoughts was somewhat as follows: Was it fitting to surrender all one's faculties to the sway of one passion, however pure? —to let the destinies of life revolve round the will, perhaps the caprice, of one woman, however perfect? This sudden distaste for all other aims came as a timely warning. He must quell the infatuation. If he suffered it to grow, it would over-master him; and what then? Supposing he succumbed, following the dictates of inclination merely, what would be the result? The result was clear. He would be involved in a hopeless quest; his life would be ruined in pursuing a dream. Hopeless? Yes, indeed, strange things happen, but scarcely things so strange as this, that such a one should be attracted by a man like him. Even were it otherwise, there were a hundred other obstacles, all insuperable. Who was she, and what was her father's house? And who was he? Wealth on both sides was the one point in common. Then there were, on hers, illustrious lineage and

ancient traditions—the sacredest of heirlooms. Were such likely to be lightly transmitted to another race, whose lineage and traditions were represented by a blank—worse than an ignoble history?

No, it was hopeless; she was as far beyond his reach as the stars in heaven. But now that he saw the madness, now that he knew the source of this fever that had been distracting his purposes, he must calmly set himself to root it out. He would not allow it to blind him, to distort the aspect of everything. He would turn it to his own purposes by escaping from it into action. Fortunately flight was in his power—instant flight. He would go away, no matter whither; he would go away from an influence which he felt might become irresistible. He would fight this madness upon evener terms, and, conquering it, would find, as the reward of victory, the true way of life. In this brave manner did Reason declare war against Passion, speaking high and earnest words to assert a confidence perhaps not truly felt, and to drown the voice of the enemy. With a surplus of confidence truly, and a strong reserve of patience, must Reason enter on such a conflict.

Cosmo, awakened from his dream, and sud-

denly conscious of his danger, turned, at first, to the side which called him with this loud note of warning, and which offered him deliverance from evils to come.

Exhausted and bewildered he submitted himself, and swore to follow Reason's dictates; but pain and heaviness were in his heart.

Poor victim! on this long day he had had many thoughts and many revelations. He had risen from the "Inferno" to Paradise, and, falling thence, was now suffering the strong pangs of Purgatory.

We must now say a word or two about Esmè, who went from the moonlight interview both interested and puzzled. Even in her first interview with Cosmo she had found him to be different from any person she had met before—of graver thoughts and more refined interests than the people she ordinarily came in contact with; and, at the same time, with a certain self-restraint and calm, in his way of looking at things and discussing them, which relieved his conversation from the oppressiveness of dogmatism. Indeed, the modesty of his tone in advancing any view — even to her — was as marked as the refined gentleness and courtesy of his manner towards her.

All this could not fail to prepossess one capable, as she was, of appreciating it; and Tom Wyedale's revelations as to his friend's somewhat fantastic earnestness in the pursuit of culture had struck her imagination as—well, as something original and exalted. It cannot be denied that she had been thinking a good deal about him all this evening, nor that she had, in fact, begun to place him upon a pedestal of calm and lofty intellectual purpose, at which serene altitude she was preparing to gaze with growing interest and admiration. Not a little puzzling, therefore, was it to find this statuesque hero immediately jumping from his pedestal, in the most human way, and pouring forth, in a burst of unconventional frankness, the passion of his self-contempt, and the despairing conviction that his life, so far from being heroic, was vacillating, little, and void. The incident was altogether astonishing. Had he come there to make *her* his *confidante?* If so, why? Or was their meeting altogether accidental? but still, if so, why was *she* the recipient of his confidence? It was almost incredible! But was it displeasing? No; such touches of nature make us more akin than statuesque heroism on the one hand, and reverent contem-

plation thereof on the other. This frank abandonment of reserve touched Esmè's sympathy, and roused that interest in the man himself, which she had before given to the rather cold abstraction—his intellectual earnestness.

But fear not, reader; she is not going to outrage your sense of the probable by blazing into a coincidence of impromptu love. We shall leave her, if you please, to her bewilderment and her interest for the present.

CHAPTER X.

Cosmo Glencairn, writhing in his mental purgatory, and physically exhausted—for a fast of fifteen hours, broken only by a crust of bread, is trying even to the powers of a novelist's hero—Cosmo Glencairn, thus suffering and prostrate, was not in the mood to receive with equanimity any further buffets from Fate. One, however, was in store for him; and it was delivered in the shape of a visit from his friend Tom Wyedale. That worthy, whose immense animal spirits obeyed with alacrity every animal influence, such as light, heat, food, drink, as well as the nervous exaltation of late hours and the friction of lively talk, was usually "about his best" when other people were thinking that the time for bed had well arrived. On this night, under a combination of pleasing stimulants, the Ravenhall bed-hour found him just in the humour to begin the evening. "Bed!" he ex-

claimed. "Bed at eleven o'clock? No, no; I'd sooner make another night of it with that devil of a Mr Cass and his excruciating 'Bourbon.' But Cosmo must be home by this time. I'll go and draw him." Accordingly, in about a minute after, a tremendous rap at Cosmo's door roused that sad muser from his troubled thoughts; and Tom broke upon his solitude with the sudden garish effect of a hundred gas-jets simultaneously "turned on" in a dark room.

"Ha, ha!" he cried—"found at last! Ah, wanderer, what anxieties have been mine! Unravel the mystery; where have you been? and how? and why? Speak! son of the pale faces; stare not with these unspeculative orbs! Unravel!"

"Oh, I've been trying an alterative—a day's solitude——"

"It don't seem to have been beneficial. Why, now I look at you, you *are* pale, with a vengeance, and—excuse my freedom—rather wild-looking. What's the matter, old man?"

"Matter? Well, I suppose I'm tired; in fact I *am* tired—done up."

"Now here *is* a mystery. Nothing more to tell?"

"Nothing more."

"Delightful! the plot thickens! a veritable mystery! who is she?"

"Who?"

"Why, the female person who must inevitably be connected with the fifteen hours' mysterious absence from his headquarters of any man under, say forty—*senioribus debetur reverentia*, I suppose."

To Tom's surprise his friend's countenance changed, as he said, hurriedly—

"There are exceptions, I suppose, even to such incontestable rules. I was away on the other side of Lake Lecco. I fell asleep, and slept for hours, in a wood. There was no Egeria there, however. I did not awake till it was dark, and—and here I am."

"Ah! yes, *that* I can see; but—well, you've had rather a meagre day it seems. *Apropos*, have you dined?"

"No, I couldn't eat. I must turn in now, I think. What have you been about?"

"Oh, *my* day has been pregnant with events."

"Tell me about them in the morning, like a good fellow."

"Why not now?"

"Now, I must sleep."

"I don't think the narrative will over-excite

you; you will sleep immediately after it, I guarantee that as a minimum. My sister and Ravenhall arrived yesterday."

"Did they? Going to stay?"

"That depends. My sister is a woman of many wiles. I dined with them last night and to-night. I find she has come down here in pursuit of game."

"Yes? what sort of game?"

"The old game—an heiress for me!"

"Oh!"

"Yes, nothing discourages her. She was passing through Milan, of course 'by the merest accident in the world,' and, scenting a prey down here, hither she has come to drive it. She has already pledged me to co-operate; she has already spread her toils, and we have had a preliminary 'beat' this afternoon. Can you guess who the victim is?"

"I know no one here, except, of course, Miss Douglas, and——"

"Well, your knowledge is sufficient for the occasion. My sister proposes to annex Miss Douglas."

Cosmo started and winced; but Tom was engaged in rolling a cigarette, and did not notice his friend's emotion.

"To annex Miss Douglas," he continued, "with all her unquestioned advantages, actual and in reversion. What do you say to it?" he went on, as Cosmo continued silent, with compressed lips and clenched hands.

"Say to it?" was the reply. "Why, what *should* I say to it?"

"Approve?"

"You know I don't approve of fortune-hunting."

"Wish me well through it, at all events."

"No, I won't. I abominate this sort of thing. I can't stand hearing a lady spoken of in this way. Even as a joke, it disgusts me."

"Ah, my dear Cosmo, this is no joke; solemn earnest, I assure you—awful earnest! I don't like the business any more than you do, though my objections are otherwise founded. But, *que diable!* a man must live."

"Must he? Not necessarily by entrapping heiresses, however."

"'Entrapping!' What a word! You change the colour of a transaction by choosing the wrong term. It is the '*suggestio falsi.*'"

"What of 'toils' and 'victims' then, and the 'pursuit of game'?"

"Pshaw! figures of speech! If an heiress

chooses to be captivated with me, that is her affair; and, indeed, since to be captivated is to be blessed, it is only kind to give her the chance of being captivated, and only fair to myself to let her see that captivation may take place on my side too."

"You don't *dare* to say that you think *Miss Douglas* is captivated with you?"

"No," said Tom, standing up to light his cigarette, and speaking between the puffs. "Alas! I wish I could; the (bother this cigarette!)—the struggle would be over, because, personally, I mean to capitulate at once. But give us both time—all three, I should say, for my sister is in the thick of it."

"I really beg that you will leave me now. You must know that this kind of language is offensive to me."

"Must I? Why? Not unless you're jealous; then I could understand: but that can't be, after what you said yesterday. You can't possibly be jealous, old boy?"

"Jealous? nonsense! but there's a right and a wrong way of talking about ladies, and yours is the wrong way. I have another motive, too, for asking you to leave me. I haven't told you, I believe, that I am going away to-morrow."

"Going away? to-morrow?" said Tom, in a voice of consternation.

"To-morrow. To England."

"The devil!" cried Tom, the gloom of whose face now rivalled that of his friend's.

"Yes, and I must get to bed now."

"But why this sudden change of plans?"

"That does not matter; they *are* changed. I *am* going; so, good night: I'll see you in the morning."

Tom was for the moment so utterly confounded that he said "Good night" absently, and left the room; but scarcely had he reached the end of the corridor, when he halted with a look of desperation, and came back rapidly to his friend's apartment.

"I beg your pardon, old man," he said, putting his head in at his friend's door, "but do you *really* mean this?"

"Yes, yes, yes. '*I am going*' is plain English, is it not?"

"Well, yes; but I thought——"

"Now, what is it?"

"Don't be so fierce, old man. Well, it is this—that heathenish banker of mine——"

"Oh, hang it! How much do you want? Out with it at once. Here's my cheque-book. Now, how much? I'm dead tired."

"Would two—yes, two-fifty, or say eighty, for three months, be——"

Before he had finished speaking, Cosmo was writing the cheque, and Tom had only had time to regret that he had not said "*Three*-eighty" when the cheque was handed to him.

"Ever so many thanks, old fellow," he said. "I'll be punctual. Three months. Let me see: we are now—hum—in May. Well, then—ah! —hum—June, July, August. August? ah! to be sure; exactly, all right," as if a sudden gleam of recollection revealed the probability of a pecuniary plethora in that month. "I hate," he added, "taking a loan without seeing my way; but August will suit admirably. Thanks, thanks. Good night. Awfully sorry you're going," and he was off.

"I would have given him double the money to be quit of him to-night," muttered Cosmo.

"What an ass I was not to say five hundred at once!" sighed Tom as he went on his way.

He was able, however (with the tangible consolation of Cosmo's cheque in his pocket), to bear with fortitude the prospect of his friend's departure. He even admitted that it was now desirable. "For," said he, "if the fellow is going to get on such a very tall moral horse, and ride

rough-shod over our new-born projects, Lucy will find it hard work to get me to stand up to the business like a man." He was inclined to think, however, that in the morning there would be another change, and that Cosmo would remain after all. But in this he was mistaken.

The day proved bright and cloudless, but cool; and when Cosmo looked forth, all that paradise of land and water lay before his eyes in its most seductive aspects. It was very trying to leave such a scene, and in such circumstances. It cost a hard struggle to resist the appeal of external Nature, who urged him with all her fascinations to linger. Even on the snow-peaks far away, the early light spread a soft and goodly bloom. The spirit of *dolce far niente* hovered over the lake and its shores. Everywhere there was "a rapture of repose;" but it was the repose of life, lulled and happy; for, now and then, some drowsy echoes of languid song came over the water, and now and then the mountain breeze passed, dreamily murmurous, through the groves, and gleaned the fragrance from their boughs, and bore it to the lake, which flashed into sunny ripples as it took the gift. A scene for happiness and love—requited love, dreaming its dream of perpetuity,

with no jarring sound from the outer world to break the dear illusion.

"Beautiful! but not for me," said Cosmo aloud, as, after gazing for a few moments at the matchless prospect, he turned from the window, and set about his preparations for the journey. So that Tom was mistaken. His friend stuck to his resolution, and went; vouchsafing no further explanation of his movement, declining Tom's escort in the steamer as far as the town of Como, and leaving that worthy, though after a kindly farewell, in a state of deep mystification. "You can address to me at the —— Club in London," said Cosmo; "and I suppose a letter to this place will find you, for some time." That was all. As the steamer carried him away, he never looked behind him. He turned his back upon the Villa Bianca, and looked straight ahead, thus symbolising that he abandoned love and dreams, and faced the future, cheerless and full of perplexity as it was.

CHAPTER XI.

In leaving Cadenabbia, Cosmo's plans were perfectly indefinite. He had suddenly decided "to go away"—and nothing more; and it would have been hard to say by what instinct (for it was scarcely with a conscious purpose) he took the route to London. But having fixed upon that destination, he pursued his journey with as much eagerness to reach its end, as though called thither by imperious necessity.

It was a beautiful morning when he reached London; and, as the forenoon wore on, he beheld from his windows in Piccadilly the stream of well-dressed loungers, on horse and foot, setting steadily towards the Park.

Beginning to feel a reaction from the excitement of rapid travel, and unfit, in fact, for anything else, he dressed and soon found himself floating with the stream to Rotten Row. It was a year since he had been there, and he felt

strangely bewildered, thus dropping from the lotus-eater's paradise of Como, into the wondrous congregation which performs the liturgy of "morning Park;" wonderful indeed, with its *coup d'œil* of beauty, movement, colour, contrast, and variety, all set in the tender frame of leaves and blossoms. He moved on absently, amidst the strangely bracketed incongruities which Fashion, with unconscious wit, here parades so lavishly. Now and then a voice broke from the level hum and hailed him. Now and then a fair equestrian swooped to him, in a gracious bow, as she cantered past. Now and then an acquaintance stopped to ask him a hurried question, or to tell him some new thing in a frugal whisper.

No one was surprised to see him; all greeted him as if one seen yesterday. Naturally: but to-day this puzzled him. A decade seemed to have elapsed since his last visit to the Park. These faces and voices seemed to belong to some half-forgotten period. He had run away from the world of dreams; and here, in the heart of the world of reality, he seemed to gaze upon a phantasmagoria.

He went on to where the path branches up to the Serpentine, and he followed it. Presently

he came upon a young man dressed in attire which had once been fashionable, but which was now dismally faded and frayed. Cosmo recognised in him, and with surprise, one of his oldest friends, and the son, moreover, of a deceased friend of his father. The young man was standing in rapt contemplation of a collie dog and a swan, who were having a "difficulty" with each other, by land and water—the dog in exasperating fun, the swan furious.

"Ah, my dear Cosmo!" he cried, "delighted to see you again! You've——but wait a bit! Just look! Swan scores now to a moral! No, he don't. Bravo, collie! Now swan! By George! a nasty one that for the dog! Thrown up the sponge. The cur! How are you, Cosmo? Look seedy. Been to Mount Ararat, picking up chips of the ark, or where? I haven't seen you for an age."

"No, I've been in Italy for a good while. But you, Phil! what on earth has happened to you?"

"I? Oh!——There now; just look at that beast of a swan!—bullying the ducks next. Never saw such a fiend as that bird is, when you once get his back up."

"You seem to be intimate with his habits."

"I believe you, and with some reason. They're my only amusement now, these birds —my only resource."

"Why, what *has* happened to you?"

"Happened to me? Look at me. I'm cleaned out, that's all. Listen to the *précis.* Spanish bonds. Twenty thousand pounds. Used to give me eighteen hundred a-year. To-day, nothing—a duck's egg, and *that* not eatable."

"But what has that to do with the birds?"

"Everything. Look at my clothes. Can I show in such things down there? Can I mingle with the world thus? The world has distinctly said 'No.' Every one has shunted me. My *quondam* fair friends have the sun in their eyes when we meet. No one was ever so exhaustively cut by everybody. I suppose I look as if I wanted to borrow money. I don't, however. But thus wags the world. Well, you see, they don't *quite* drive me out of the Park. I'm still here, for my hours of recreation, ha! ha! But it's no fun being cut every two minutes; and besides, my clothes are really too scandalous; so I hang about up here a good deal, commanding a view, with one eye, of the Row, my ancient friends, and former way of life, and observing, with the other, the habits of these birds—who,

to do them justice, are really good fun, if you give your mind to them. My right eye and my left compare notes; and fine philosophisings and withering sarcasms are evolved beneath this seedy tile. But to think that eighteen months ago I was down there in the 'Ride' well mounted, fed, dressed, liked — and now these paltry water-fowl for all my pals. The pity of it, Cosmo!—the pity of it!"

"Why, Phil, you talk like an imbecile. Do you expect to mend matters by idling here? Why don't you do something? Why don't you take the remnant of your money and go and work with it in a new sphere—a colony—anywhere out of this?"

"Easy to say 'work' and 'remnant.' Produce the 'work' *and* the 'remnant,' and I'll do the one and use the other—if I can. I'm sick of this life. Not a club to my name now; can't stand the ready money. Tick at a cheap restaurant; garret in Soho; about a hundred pounds left of all I had; that sum owed over and over again to divers suckers of blood. That's the situation; and a pretty grisly one I find it, Cosmo, my friend.

"I remember that, after my father's death, I went to your father, and asked him about an

investment for my £20,000. He advised me to put it into a business, and go in with it myself, and work and make a fortune. I reminded him that my own father had begun life with the same capital, and, after working hard all his life, and making half a million, lost it all one fine morning, and was only able to leave his nest-egg to me, because it had been settled on my mother. 'Well,' said your father, 'you can't afford to be idle on the *legitimate* interest of £20,000.' 'No,' I said; 'but as my father was ruined by legitimate business and work, I think I'll try what can be done with illegitimate interest and idleness. It's a toss-up between the two as to safety, I fancy. Can you put me up to some nice illegitimate thing, at about 20 per cent?' Then your governor flared up, and sent me about my business. Well I know better now. I wish I had the chance again of taking his advice."

"After all, Phil," said Cosmo, "we both want the same thing. We both want work."

"Why on earth do *you* wish to work?"

"To satisfy myself; and since, to obtain the same end, you *must* work, we are in the same boat."

"Remember, however, that you are a cabin passenger, and that I am in the forecastle."

"Well, we're both sailing in search of the same port, and the more or less comforts of the voyage don't matter much."

"Don't they? Exchange berths with me, and I'll cruise about, *sine die*, without bothering about the port at all."

"You take a low view of things, Phil."

"So, perhaps, would you, if you were hungry and ill lodged, and ill clad, and then cut by all the world, whereas I once had troops of friends: yet, I am sure, I never did any fellow any harm—not willingly, at least."

"Dear old Phil! I'm sure you never did. I'm very sorry for you—more than very sorry. What can I do for you?"

"I don't know, Cosmo. You know I won't borrow money; besides, it wouldn't be borrowing now. So what you *may* do, if you can, is, I suppose, to find me some employment."

"I wish I could, Phil; but there is nothing so hard to find as employment for a man not specially trained to anything."

"Ah, yes; but my views are limited now. With all my heart, and thankfully, I will tackle to anything, and take what I can get. I know the difficulties of getting that 'something' to do, which ruined men, brought up to do no-

thing, are always hunting for. I've exhausted every method: answered scores of advertisements—even reached that deepest depth of replying (with enclosure of fourteen stamps) to one which offered 'gentlemanly employment—not involving serious distraction from other work—at £5 a-week.' I've reached, perhaps, even a deeper depth than that. I offered myself as advertising poet to Blogg the cheap shirt-maker! I wrote, at his request, a sample of my powers, in celebration of his 'Obconic Shirt'—and was rejected,—I, Philip Denwick, who was *proxime accessit* for the Chancellor's medal at Cambridge, was found unworthy to hymn the huckstering invention of a man named Blogg! Look here; here are the verses. Read them, and say if Blogg is not a monster of obtuseness."

He took a slip of paper from his pocket and handed it to Cosmo, who read as follows:—

"Buy Blogg's Obconic Shirt at 3s. 9d."

Obconic! Obconic! thy magical name
Electrified London, in letters of flame;
For "Sandwich" battalions swept slow through the streets,
With the awful *aplomb* of police on their beats,
Displaying on boards, borne like banners in line,
The legend, "Obconic! by Blogg. Three-and-nine."

I went by the river, I came by the Strand;
Around me, above me—by water and land,
From pier and from boarding, from 'bus, boat, and wall,
The genius of Blogg spoke its gospel to all:
But the people were puzzled, and failed to divine
What it meant—this "Obconic! by Blogg. Three-and-nine."

. . . . . .

Time passed! 'Twas the leafiest moment of June,
And the hands on the clock of High Fashion marked noon,
When shadily placed in Hyde Park, by the "Ride,"
I watched, flowing by, the equestrian tide—
Full and smooth as the flood of exuberant Rhine,
Or thy bosom, "Obconic! by Blogg. Three-and-nine."

"Anonyma" passed on her high-stepping mare,
Lady this and Lord that and Sir t'other were there,
And Rumour asserted the Prince was at hand,
And loud clashed, from Knightsbridge, the cavalry band;
But none to mere pleasure their hearts could resign,
For the thought of "Obconic! by Blogg. Three-and-nine."

Oh, languid's the stare, it is said, of *haut ton!*
And it seldom looks hard at one object, or long;
But modish restraints were cast wildly aside,
When sudden appeared, in the midst of the "Ride,"
A youth, who all others in grace did outshine;
'Twas thy "showman," "Obconic! by Blogg. Three-and-nine."

Swift reined in their jennets fair bevies of belles,
Slow backward in dudgeon fell armies of swells—
Admiration and envy shot fire from each eye,
As the noble young *gaillard* rode haughtily by;
Ay! well might his bosom swell high, I opine,
For it swelled 'neath "Obconic! by Blogg. Three-and-nine."

Curveting lightly, he passed up the "Ride,"
And Fashion, at first, stood agape on each side;
But soon rose a shout, 'mid the champing of bits,
"This *must* be 'Obconic.' Just see how it fits!"
"You are right," cried the youth, as he bowed down the line;
"You behold the 'Obconic! by Blogg. Three-and-nine.'"

Swiftly he turned him, and passed to the street,
Galloped behind him a glittering suite;
Racing and chasing up Piccadillee,
Went nobles and gentles—a wonder to see—
Racing and chasing, for none wished to dine
Till supplied with "Obconic! by Blogg. Three-and-nine."

The clubs of St James's, the clubs of Pall Mall,
Sent the flower of their youth the procession to swell,
And when it had come to that warehouse of Blogg's,
A thousand young nobs, in the noblest of togs,
Rushed in, and exclaimed, as though maddened with wine,
"Give us *all* the 'Obconic! by Blogg. Three-and-nine.'"

It was done; and the pick of the nobilitee
Went scampering homewards in pride and in glee:
And from that day to this he who longs for success—
For the senate's applause, or the maiden's caress—
Never needs to despond, or his dear hopes resign,
While he sports the "Obconic! by Blogg. Three-and-nine."

Cosmo gave him back the paper, laughing heartily at the quaint earnestness of his friend's expression in contrast with the preposterous absurdity of the verses.

"I think," he said, "Mr Blogg must be rather fastidious."

"The villain had the audacity to say that he didn't think my vein was 'hepic' enough

for his line of business: but it's just my luck all over; nothing will ever turn up trumps for me."

"Don't say that, Phil. I'll think it over, and see what can be done. Meantime, dine with me to-night at 'The Gastronomic,' and we'll talk it over: eight o'clock."

"All right; but in that case I must go and give warning at the restaurant, or they'll nail me for the daily 'regulation.' *Au revoir.*"

"Money! money! money!" mused Cosmo, as he strolled along; "half my friends seem to have no other cry on their lips or wish in their hearts. It is their *summum bonum.* If they got their wish, I wonder how many of them would be happier than they are. It seems to do nothing for me in that way. I doubt if even Tom Wyedale would be happier. Without all that intriguing against his banker and friends which represents his mental activity at present, he would find life flat. Poor Phil's case is different. Actually pinched for the common necessaries of life! That is horrible! Then he is willing to work, and unwilling to borrow. I doubt if anything would bring Tom to that. I can conceive no circumstances under which Tom would not have fine clothes and

good dinners. Poor Phil is of a different stamp; has good brains, and is a manly fellow in his way; and these misfortunes, with work to follow—lots of work—might make a man of him. He is not steeped to the chin in pleasure and selfishness, like Tom."

. . . . .

"After all, perhaps, these *are* lucky fellows whose *summum bonum is* money—for that, at least, is attainable; while mine is what I must not even think of. Let me be honest with myself, and admit it. Let me be true to myself, and find a substitute for it. A substitute! well, at least an anodyne. Work is the only anodyne. Enough of myself; let me think of Phil. Something *must* be done for him. Surely my father might find something for him—the son of his old friend—at my intercession. Yes, I think so; I will try. By the by, what an age it is since I saw my father! I must write and tell him of my return, or go down and see him. That will be best. I will go down at once—to-morrow. I will try to forget myself, and think only of Phil, till I have set him on his feet again."

CHAPTER XII.

"Ah! bravo, Phil! punctual to the moment!" cried Cosmo, as his guest entered the hall of the club.

"Hunger is the best horologe, my friend—a new aphorism—nearly all my own."

"Bring it into the dining-room, then. Dinner is ready."

"Oh, this is a sensation I did not expect to experience again! Two years since I ate my last dinner here—then, alas! a member. I say" (pausing in the hall), "how about my garments? All right?"

"Perfectly."

"We don't dress at our ordinary—that gives the evening things a chance. There's a fungusy sort of a smell about them, though, I fear; notice it?"

"Not a bit. Come on."

"By George! what a lot of fellows! This

your table? Thank goodness! I shouldn't like to run the gauntlet of the whole room. But, after all, I've done nothing to be ashamed of. Courage, Philip Denwick! Courage, *mon brave!* Oh, you Amphitryon! Oysters and chablis! The price of three days' dinners in the molluscs, and in the wine——"

"Bad manners, Phil, to appraise the dinner."

"Ah, to be sure; they are exotics culled in Leicester Square. But, after six oysters and a glass of chablis, my retransformation will be complete."

"Poor old Phil!" said Cosmo, "I'm awfully glad to see you. By the by, I have an idea that I shall manage to get something for you through my father. I think we shall make it all right. So, meantime, eat, drink, and be merry."

"Ah, Cosmo! why are you so kind to me? I don't deserve it; I'm a worthless fellow. Why, you've actually been thinking and scheming about me since we met—the only fellow who has given me a thought——"

"Tut, man! it is only common friendship; don't gush about it."

"No, I won't gush; but it isn't 'common friendship.' Common friendship (*experto crede*)

has the sun in his eyes or is morbidly interested in the pavement, when he meets an old pal in a rusty coat. All those fellows down there—I know a dozen of them—are 'common friendship.' They pass by on the other side. If I had been a thief it would have been different; but I only fell among thieves; and you are the only good Samaritan."

"Now, Phil, shut up."

"Well, I will; but admit that you are pouring into my wounds oil——"

"No more of it."

"Not to say, oysters and chablis, and those other benefits to come with which gratitude is so much concerned," added Phil, turning off in a joke the emotion which kindness, long strange to him, really awakened. "Yet, he continued—

> "'Yet to that golden heart of thine,
> I'll pledge this blossom of the golden wine.'

On second thoughts, I won't; I'll await the champagne, which I perceive to be in ambush; for the poet's 'blossom' must clearly mean the *mousse* of that delicious intoxicant. Let us be exact."

"I say, Phil," said Cosmo, "how do you get on for society? Solitude to a gregarious man like you must be a real affliction."

"Society? I *have* none; except, of course, at my dinner hour, in the modest restaurant close by Leicester Square."

"And what is that?"

"Mixed rather; all foreign, but of all nationalities. We are couriers, most of us; but some of us are *commis-voyageurs*, refugees—spies, I suppose—and suchlike. We're a funny lot."

"How on earth did you drop into it?"

"I dropped into it because the drop into foreign low life did not seem so deep as the drop into the home equivalent; besides, I don't believe there can be an English establishment of the sort, with anything like the same low rate of charges."

"Do you fraternise with your messmates?"

"Rather! Couldn't be avoided—*at* meals."

"And what are you supposed to be?"

"Oh, they decided that somehow for themselves—an artist! And the theory has developed, so that I am now an unappreciated genius, with a great but unfinished work in my *atelier*, which one day will, &c. &c. At first, I thought of being a 'nobleman in disguise,' but it struck me the disguise would become exaggerated as Time and my wardrobe fought it out to the bitter end. Besides, I should have been too much

above my company. You see, we have no men of title among us, except, perhaps, a *chevalier d'industrie* or two, and they are too retiring to parade their distinction."

"Don't they hang on to you, apart from the dinner-hour?"

"No, I manage to choke them off. Their society *at* dinner is quite enough. Their manners are not too nice, nor is their converse edifying. There is fine free talking I can tell you, among the couriers. I get some startling new views of some of my old friends—(their employers). They have eyes, these fellows; certainly they have tongues. Well, it is to be hoped they seldom speak the truth. In any case, no one is sacred. They spare neither sex nor age. *Apropos*, you ought to hear the beasts bragging of their conquests. It makes one's blood curdle when it doesn't make one laugh. There was a row at dinner among the lady-killers yesterday, which was rich. It began in this sort of way, between a Russian and a Frenchman—awful scoundrels both.

"'Figurez vous!' quoth Antoine, the French villain—'figurez vous! Je viens de voir cette adorable Laydee Mayree, au parc, ce matin!'

"'Bien! bien!' growls Ivan, the Russ, who

rather thinks he ought to have a monopoly of the Lotharious business.

"'Elle m'aime à la folie! c'est sûr,' cries Antoine.

"'Vous le croyez?'

"'Si je le crois! quand nous nous rencontrons elle me fait comprendre tous ses sentiments, par un tout petit clignement d'œil.'

"'Et cela veut dire?'

"'Cela dit, "Antoine! adorable Antoine! décidez vous à vous déclarer franchement. Moi, je suis jeune, riche, belle, noble; cependant je suis tout à vous. Avancez, donc! Demandez! vous y gagnerez!"'

"'Il paraît,' says Ivan, 'que ce diable de clignement d'œil vaut bien des paroles! Mais pourquoi ne pas s'avancer?'

"'Ha! il y en a bien d'autres qui—— Ecoutez—'

"'Uh! ub! ub! ub! bah!' roars Ivan, 'laissez moi parler. Vous connaissez la Comtesse de——?'

"'Je l'ai vue; c'est une belle petite veuve qui va se marier avec Seer Jams Thormson.'

"'Ce n'est pas vrai.'

"'Qui vous a dit le contraire?'

"'La Comtesse elle-même—hier au soir—par un petit hochement d'épaules.'

"'Ce qui explique?'

"'Ce qui dit: "Ivan! ne croyez pas leurs detestables mensonges! Je n'ai de place dans mon cœur que pour vous! Seer Jams n'est rien pour moi!"'

"'C'est un hochement qui s'exprime tout nettement! Ecoutez! La Laydee Mayree——'

"'Ub! ub! ub! ub! bah!'

"'Est ce que c'est un ours qui parle? ou bien un porc?' cries Antoine, in a fury. Here a heavy German miscreant, Fritz, explained to me confidentially, but aloud, 'Mees Fannee Baykair ees een loff wees me. Himmel! aw-fool-lee een loff.' The others turned like tigers on the outsider who was violating their special territory. 'Amoureuse de toi!' they cried. 'Amoureuse de toi! avec ta figure de cochon!' Then there was a row, and they all fought in a bunch. Ah, Cosmo, you may laugh! but to sit at meat with ruffians of that sort is not the least of trials. When I think of them I say, 'What is there in the way of work that I would not undertake if thereby I might escape?'"

"Your old aversion to work has evaporated?"

"Perforce it is clean gone. I long for work."

"Stick to that, Phil, and we'll pull you through. You're fortunate, I daresay, to be beyond the reach of fastidiousness."

"Fastidiousness! why, if I hadn't come across you, I believe that, in a very few days, I would have taken a regular header, and separated myself, once for all, from my old grade—become a 'working man.'"

"Couldn't you have become a reporter for the press, or even a writer?"

"I daresay I could, if they would have had me, which they wouldn't. My antecedents were not in my favour, and I had no one to back me, so everything was barred. I went to Sherville, the Under-Secretary, you know, who really has some influence, and used to be a great friend of mine. I asked him if he couldn't put me up to something of the sort. He was very civil, and said he 'would see,' and let me know. He didn't let me know, and now he can't even see me. I suppose he's ashamed of having forgotten all about it, and so falls back on cutting me. Stupid of him! Aha! here comes Flintshire! Now, what will *he* do?" He has ignored me steadily ever since 'the fall.' He can't pass *you*. Come, I enjoy this. Yes, thanks, another glass of champagne."

Up came the noble lord alluded to, and stopped to greet Glencairn effusively, who returned his salutations, and then said—

"Surely you and Denwick know each other?"

Whereupon his lordship screwed his glass very tight into his eye, stepped back, gazed earnestly at Phil, then thrust a right cordial arm across the table, and exclaimed—

"Why, bless me! it *is* Denwick! Bless me, so it is! Who *would* have expected to see you? And how are *you?* Don't know *when* I've seen you. Been to the-er 'Catacombs,' haven't you?"

"Well, I've been a good deal in that line of country."

"So some one said — Pyramids or 'Catacombs'—forget which; and how are *you?*"

"Well, I feel a little mouldy after the 'Catacombs.'"

"Mouldy! Ha! ha! ha! So like *him,* eh? Not half a bad place, though, I suppose? Lots of shooting and that—Egypt-er. Well, my time's up," and off he went.

"What does the ass mean by the 'Catacombs'? I don't suppose he knows what he means; but he *does* know that he's seen me half-a-dozen times in the last month. Oh, here

comes little Peter Wellborough! him will I accost."

Up came Peter, crying gaily, "Just come to town, you two foreigners of distinction? Couldn't have the appetite for a *menu* like this if you had been here a week."

"Why do you cut me nowadays, Peter?" asked Phil, in whose veins the champagne was beginning to "make summer."

"Cut you?" (rather abashed)—"*I* cut *you?*"

"Distinctly, dead."

"Oh! come now, that's turning the tables on a fellow with a vengeance. Here's a fellow, Glencairn, who disguises himself, and prowls about in shady places dressed beyond recognition, never comes to his clubs, avoids every one, and then says he's cut. Why, of course, every one thinks he has a game—amateur detective—mysterious intrigue—what not,—and humours him. *I'm* too discreet to thrust myself on a fellow when I see he has a game—*that* I am. But if he *hasn't* a game he ought to tell us. I was just saying so to Bamboro."

"What were you just saying to Bamboro?" asked the individual in question; an over-eaten, insolent-looking man who now joined them.

"About Denwick, you know."

"What of him?"

"Says *we* cut him."

"Does he? Well, *I* do; he's right, so far as I am concerned."

"Why do you cut me, Bamboro?" asked Phil.

"Because you look such a sweep."

"That's frank enough, at all events."

"Why do you wear such infernal old clothes, then?"

"Because I'm ruined—that's why; got no money to pay for new ones."

"'Ruined!' 'pay!'—what words! My poor fellow, no amount of misfortune can excuse the use of such coarse expressions. Why, most of us *are* 'ruined,' as you call it. You can't be worse than *I* am; but it don't interfere with my comfort much, or with my clothes at all. It *does* prevent me knowing fellows who get themselves up like rat-catchers, however. My tailor wouldn't like it, you see; and he *is* entitled to a voice in such a matter. But I'm glad to see you're clean again; for, after all, I never cut *you*—I only cut your clothes."

"Rather a nice distinction."

"Well, so it is; it is quite true that a man

and his clothes are pretty much the same thing, —but you know what I mean. How's that 'Chateaubriand'?" wistfully eyeing a *plat*. "Looks wonderful—must try to remember it to-morrow. You ought to drink one glass of a generous burgundy after it—it deserves the compliment. Not champagne! No, no, my dear Phil Denwick, NOT CHAMPAGNE!" and he almost interfered violently to prevent the profane draught. "Well, I must leave such heathens. Off to the opera, and awfully late."

"Humbugs and ruffians!" said Phil, when they were again alone—"that's the division which my Serpentine philosophy makes of mankind."

"The sweetening of your philosophy does not seem to have been among the uses of adversity. The Bamboro system is not so gloomy; it merely divides mankind into pegs for new clothes and pegs for old ones."

"Bamboro is a complete ruffian."

"And he seems to think that you and 'old clothes' are pretty nearly interchangeable terms; so each of you falls within the other's division. Seriously, Phil, it astonishes me to see you taking all this cutting, dropping, ignoring—or

whatever you call it—so much to heart. What can it matter?"

"Try it for eighteen months, and you'll see what it matters."

"Well, but if every one is either a humbug or a ruffian, it can be no great hardship to you (the exceptional unit, I presume?) to lose such society."

"One didn't know what the society was till it was tried. But besides all that, if a man can get nothing to do—if he is forced to be idle and solitary—he necessarily lives much in his own thoughts, which, under the circumstances, are, rightly or wrongly, certain to be bitter. I think mine are righteously so."

"You used not to be selfish, Phil; but this is the very acme of selfishness; you judge all your old friends, *en bloc*, simply from your own point of view. You fasten motives on them that may not be theirs in reality. Many of them very possibly think it kinder to you to drop a surface acquaintanceship, which can bring you neither pleasure nor advantage, but really the reverse."

"Ah, they should leave me to judge of that. However, I won't defend myself. But remember, as extenuating circumstances, that I have

been grazing for eighteen months among black sheep in Leicester Square, and that the touch of pitch defiles. Then let bygones be bygones. If I were only out of sight of all these fellows, and the old life, and at work, somewhere, somehow, I promise you I wouldn't waste a thought on Bamboro & Co.—selfish or humane: as to philosophising about them, pah! I'd none of it."

"Work, Phil! yes, that is the grand panacea for all evils."

"Even on the homœopathic principle—*similia similibus*—I welcome it."

"It kills morbid thoughts, and cheats the devil."

"I'm sick of the devil, and would gladly thwart him."

"It will distract you from selfishness."

"By satisfying the wants of 'self.'"

"It will give you a healthier tone about your brother men."

"By leaving me no leisure to observe their characteristics."

"It will teach you self-reliance."

"Having already learned that vain is the help of other men."

"You are incorrigible, Phil, and sadly deteriorated."

"Ah, Cosmo, I'm only joking! But mind you, old fellow, it is pretty easy to be philanthropic when all the race of man smiles on you. I don't think it can be very hard to give good for good. It is scarcely meritorious to be open-handed, when one's hands are too full to close; or to be interested about others' needs, when one has no necessities of one's own! There is a Johnsonian sentence for you, to illustrate the vanity of well-to-do virtue and selfishness. Why, my dear old boy, I might hoist you with your own petard, and prove even *you* selfish for looking at me, only from your own point of view! Ah! well, well, we're passing into the champagny stage of ethics. *Apropos*, pass that king of wine, and I'll propose a toast to 'Honest Industry.' Drink to it, mine host!"

The champagne, and the reaction from solitude and desperation, sent poor Phil's spirits up to the pitch of hilarity for a while; and in ebbs and flows of grave and gay, the conversation went on, and the evening passed. When the friends separated, it continued a settled point that Cosmo should go down to his father the next day, and do what he could for Phil. What the something to be done, or got, for him, remained quite vague and indefinite. Phil was himself

indifferent to the nature of the employment he might get.

"I feel," he said, "at this moment—thus warmed with the good wine—equal to anything. I feel deuced like Longfellow's 'Village Blacksmith.' I mean to make *him* my model. 'The sinews of my brawny arms shall be like strong and iron bands.' Good night, Cosmo. You'll give me the earliest intelligence of a 'career,' won't you? I long to begin it" (singing)—

> "'Each morning sees some work begun,
> Each evening sees its close.'

Great fellow the smith! I always liked him!" and so Phil went off to his garret, with a heart lighter than it had been for many a long day—and Cosmo to his luxurious chambers, musing upon many things.

When Love has once "ventured in," it is difficult for the strongest nature to expel it by mere force of will, and altogether impossible to do so summarily. It is easy to say "I will stamp it out;" but it rises from the process: cast out for a moment, it steals back into the consciousness, wrapped in mists of subtle reverie, and, regaining its lost vantage-ground, again boldly confronts its antagonist. Thus, alas! it befell with the heroic Cosmo, who, though, forti-

fied by an evening spent "out of himself," he resisted, when first left alone, the clamorous intruder, resisted not for very long. He turned himself to Phil's affairs, and the means of extricating him from his troubles. He sketched out one or two little schemes, which he thought of submitting to his father, on his friend's behalf; and, as long as he thus devoted his attention, he did well. But presently, on recalling the conversation of the evening, he began to feel that he had lectured his friend in a pharisaical way about selfishness; and some echoes of the high moralities he had indulged in, came back to him with the true ring of Eliphaz the Temanite, and his brethren in consolation. Then, reverting to some random remarks of Phil's, on the nature of well-to-do unselfishness, it dawned upon him that there was a very large beam in his own eye, and, by pretty easy stages, he arrived at the cheerful conclusion (in his ordinary style) that the principle which regulated his own life was one of simple egotism. Once back to the subject of self, his faults, failures, &c. &c.—a subtle sub-current flowed into his mind, bringing with it, among other suggested antidotes for egotism, the thought that a life might be happily rescued from selfishness by devotion to *another* life,

whose beauty and nobility should be contagious, by union with *another* nature, mere contact with which should inspire lofty motives and instigate purely generous actions. And thus beguiled, Cosmo floated unconsciously away back to the Lake of Como, to the pathetic moonlight, and the whispering groves and listening waters—to her who, amidst all that goodliness, had revealed herself to him as the mistress of his heart.

For hours he sat plunged in this narcotic reverie; on, through the silent hours, incapable of effort to throw it off. The voices of the night were hushed, and everything was still; but ever upon the ear of Cosmo's fancy, *one* soft wave of distant music seemed to beat its sweet refrain. Out in the summer night nothing was visible save the dim outlines of dewy trees; but ever before Cosmo's eyes *one* vision seemed to pass, and return, and pass again incessantly, moving with a thousand remembered charms of movement, bright with the magic of remembered smiles. Love ruled the hour and used his opportunities; and though his captive struggled not, he tightened all his bonds. Resolution whispered remonstrance, and Cosmo cried, "Why should I die, without one effort for life? With-

out *her*, life will be death in life." Despair muttered "Lost!" and Cosmo cried, "I despaired too soon." Then Despair and Resolution fled; and Hope returned and gave the battle to the strong—and strong Love ruled the hour!

That is to say, in mere English, that, through much confusion, Cosmo reached, at the end, one clear idea and one clear purpose, and these were, (sparing the reader a journey through the tortuous avenues by which he arrived at them) as follows: that he had despaired and fled prematurely and on uncertain grounds; that these grounds were, mainly, the belief or the suspicion, or something between the two, that there rested on his origin some stigma which must make his suit hopeless; that this belief was founded on his father's silence as to their origin, which silence had been explained long ago by a maternal uncle to mean that they *had* no history, or rather that the brief history which they had was disgraceful, and would not bear investigation, or even talking about. But his father was intensely reserved on all subjects; and his uncle's views on the subject of pedigree were hyperbolical; besides which there had never been any familiar intercourse between the father and the uncle. Perhaps, then, the stigma might

be—nothing altogether insuperable. So thought Cosmo, to-night, in the exaltation of his love; and his resolution was that the visit to his father, decided on for to-morrow, should, besides the regulation of Phil's fortunes, have another purpose very paramount to that.

"I have been hasty and impulsive," Cosmo said to himself; "I daresay it was owing to the wild tumult and agitation I fell into *out there*. Well, now, at least, while there is a vestige of hope, I will not give it up. It may be infinitesimal, perhaps, but I will not abandon it till I am forced to do so by clear evidence. I have not kept to my resolve? No, I have not. Love is stronger than I thought, or I am weaker. 'Weakness?' 'Is this 'weakness'? It may be; it may be weakness to cling to life; and she is my life. To-morrow I will ask my father for a frank statement of the truth."

And so Cosmo at last went to bed with a hazy notion (as a sort of *P.S.*) that Phil was a providential dispensation, and that, but for him, the appeal to his father might not have suggested itself. But with this view those only will coincide who believed that, when he sailed away from Cadenabbia, he really "turned his back on love and dreams" for ever.

CHAPTER XIII.

The next afternoon saw Cosmo arrive at his father's abode. It lay at the distance of half-a-day's journey from London, in a solitary district, on the outskirts of an ancient forest, within sight of the sea. The house was old, Gothic, and of imposing dimensions; its *entourage* of wooded park was unenclosed, and gradually lost itself in a heathery wilderness, which rose into uplands behind the house, and, in front, sloped down till it touched the sandy margin of the sea. With some dignity, the place had yet a gloomy, sorrow-stricken aspect; for there was scarcely a trace of human life visible in the far-spreading wolds, and the dark hues of pine-woods saddened the summer light about the house, and deepened the gloom of winter. Altogether, in its sombre silence, the place seemed to mourn the fallen fortunes of its lord — an impoverished nobleman, from whom

Mr Glencairn rented Edlisfort Castle on a long lease; and no one approaching the house could have failed to ask, "What kind of man can care to bury himself here? voluntarily, out of the world, among desert wilds by a melancholy sea, in an old castle looking like the very tomb of Hope?" And one would unquestionably have expected to hear of a romantic character — a grand melodramatic fellow, with a history and a broken heart, probably. But no mysterious romance attached itself to Mr Glencairn. His social needs were few, and such society as he desired he imported, and entertained with large hospitality. He believed in HIMSELF, in Truth, in Energy, in the adroit use of opportunity, and in Ozone. He had been practically faithful to his creed, and with these results. In the iron trade he had become a millionaire, and, availing himself of an opportunity of the epoch, he had sold his business, with its grand *prestige*, to a company formed to conduct it. Freed thus from absorption in a special sphere, and with vast resources at command, his energy found ever-increasing outlets in channels of new enterprise, which extended to many parts of the world, and which he undertook, in many instances, single-handed. Altogether self-reliant,

he did not desire, and often suspected, the counsels of others. He was able, therefore, to live away from the centre of business life. To breathe fresh air and live apart were, for him, the necessary conditions of mental and bodily health. Hence his abode in the wilderness.

A special wire, laid on to the main line of telegraph, brought all that he required to know direct into his own working-room. "Thus," he would say, "I avoid all that superfluous stuff, which even business men can't keep out of business conversation. What I want is facts simply, not opinions. I can form these for myself." At one end of the telegraph a familiar spirit collected facts, and committed them concisely to wire; at the other end, a second familiar — a laconic secretary — received the facts, and placed them, without comment, before his employer.

The scenery was nothing to Mr Glencairn. He walked about continually, indeed, in the open air. But he did his work thus, and was too "inverted" to have much of an eye for the outer world. He only knew that the sea air and the breath of pine and heather gave him vigour, and kept his mind elastic; while, as for solitude, many an elaborate scheme would have

fallen still-born, but for the freedom from interruption with which his unpeopled desert favoured him. So that about this castle of gloom and its *châtelain* there was no mystery at all.

From these few hints as to the characteristics of Mr Glencairn, the reader will perceive that the contrast between him and his son was as marked as possible; and, indeed, what nature had ordained in this respect had been farther developed by the exceptional relations which had existed between them from Cosmo's earliest boyhood. His mother, long since dead, had been a well-born lady, whose family had chosen to treat as a *mésalliance* her marriage with Mr Glencairn, though already rich, and rapidly rising to great wealth. They had discarded her accordingly—at least during the lifetime of her parents. Eventually, however, her only brother, who loved her much, contrived to get over her indiscretion and to forgive her; and when she died, since he had no other heir for his considerable property, he made certain overtures to his widowed brother-in-law as to the upbringing and future destinies of the boy Cosmo. This Colonel Wildgrave—an ex-Guardsman, a man of the world, humane, accomplished, and a universal favourite in society—loved the little boy

for his mother's sake; but he felt that if his nephew were to be his future representative, he, on his side, had a right to stipulate that Cosmo should be brought up according to *his* ideas, introduced into *his* world, and put into the grooves of life which he approved. In this sense, then, were his overtures. Mr Glencairn had a trader's reverence for realised wealth—for capital, landed high and dry on the bank, beyond the reach of commercial fluctuations,—and he received the proposals well. "It must be £7000 to £8000 a-year at least," he said inwardly; and, aloud, that he had no educational prejudices. He then pointed out that, as a general rule, a merchant's son could never rely upon a hereditary fortune from his father, and ought therefore to be taught to make his own way. At the same time, if Cosmo's independence of personal exertion were assured,—if his uncle's inheritance were pledged to him,—then, indeed, his uncle was free to form him, launch him, do with him, in fact, exactly as seemed to him to be best. Of course, natural affection was to be considered. Cosmo, according to the protocol, was to be much with his papa, whose ample purse was in the meantime to defray the boy's expenses. The agreement was concluded,

and loyally carried out, although the article about "natural affection" was by no means strained. Mr Glencairn was deeply absorbed in other cares, and he had no great natural sympathy or tenderness, so that he gladly humoured the boy's manifest inclination to spend the bulk of his holidays with his uncle and aunt. Thus, by degrees, "home," with him, came to mean his uncle's house, and his father's house was only looked upon as the scene of occasional visits. To his uncle and his aunt he gave all his affection. Blessed with bright and genial natures, they captivated the boy's sympathy and confidence. They entered into all his young enthusiasms and ambitions; and if, proud of his abilities and the promise of his nature, they erred on the side of letting him shape, in his later school and college days, his own course, in accordance with what they believed to be his genius, they had all along done their best not to "spoil him," in the common acceptation of the term. Above all things, they had aimed at making him a loyal, high-bred gentleman. Parents, and more than are most parents, they were to him. Healthy home influence and training, education at Eton and Trinity, a commission in the army, and an entry into good

society under the best auspices,—these, and the results flowing from such experiences, were what the substituted parentage did and procured for Cosmo. But all these advantages gradually widened the gulf which nature had placed between the father and the son. Neither public school nor university could credit itself with Mr Glencairn's education. Art and literature were for him the *hors-d'œuvres* of life, which could not concern a man whose life was already full to overflowing of graver concerns. The army he regarded, on the one hand, as an expensive and inefficient method of insurance—and, on the other, as a toy devised in the interests of the privileged classes. As for "society," in the limited sense of the term, he knew no more of its components and usages than he did of Greek iambics or the duties of a squadron leader.

Habits of life and thought, tastes, aims, standards—everything, in a word, which differentiates a man—sundered him from his son. At the very best, their relations—though not unkindly—had not been natural. From the earliest period, Mr Glencairn had looked upon Cosmo in a double light. He was his child, to be sure, and, as such, subject to his control and domina-

tion; but, beyond this, he was mixed up with the idea of "realised capital," and, as such, the object of a certain instinctive veneration, scarcely consonant with the parental relation. As time went on, and Cosmo's character and ways of life developed, this respect was progressively enhanced; for however much a man may affect to disregard what does not seem to touch the special groove in which he has embedded himself, there are influences which will affect all sorts and conditions of men—the charm of high-breeding, for example, and a wide and liberal range of knowledge.

After Cosmo had been for some years in the army, the deaths of his uncle and aunt occurred, almost simultaneously. The double blow fell very heavily upon him; and it was during the solitude and depression of his period of mourning that he resolved upon abandoning the service in favour of a more "earnest" career. Henceforth there was no monetary tie between Mr Glencairn and Cosmo; and since his new projects led the latter into much foreign travel, he had latterly seen very little indeed of his father; and now their relations were more than ever unlike those of father and son. To his son, Mr Glencairn was more than ever the one-sided,

concentrated money-maker—comprehensible indeed, but not admirable, except in regard of unsullied probity. To his father, Cosmo's relation to funded capital was more and more accentuated. On the whole, however, though much sympathy between them was impossible, there was a fair amount of mutual respect, from widely different standpoints.

CHAPTER XIV.

Cosmo found his father at home—a tall, erect, iron-grey man of threescore or thereabouts, with a firm mouth, and hard but honest grey eyes.

"Glad to see you, Cosmo," he said. "I got your telegram. Only back from Paris myself three days; there on Land Company business; fancied you might be there at the same time; thought you were due: were there, I suppose?" Mr Glencairn's conversation was rather telegraphic in style — condensed, jerky, and elliptical.

"I think not," replied Cosmo. "I passed through Paris merely."

"And where are you from?"

"From the Italian lakes last."

"Still bitten with the picture mania, hey?"

"I am still fond of pictures; but there's not much in that way down there."

"Ah! well. Any news?"

"No; I think not." (Could there be any news under such circumstances?)

"Been well?"

"Thanks; extremely so. And you?"

"I am always well."

Then came that pause which occurs between two men who, with nothing in common but the formal tie of relationship, are painfully conscious of the fact.

"My aunt is well, I hope?" Cosmo resumed, as a forlorn hope.

"Your aunt is never ill. No one so tough. You'll find her tougher than ever, I think," he added, with a grim smile.

Then came another pause, relieved by "the weather," but inappreciably, for Mr Glencairn set his face against iteration, and "identified" it, through any disguise, with the eye of a detective. At last there really seemed to be nothing more to be said between the two, and it was a palpable relief to both when the thunder of the dressing-gong broke up the *tête-à-tête*.

When Cosmo returned to the drawing-room, he found the party already assembled, consisting, besides his father, of another gentleman and the aunt for whom he had made inquiries.

There is always something rather risky about a maiden aunt—that is to say, when she is of a "certain age;" and Cosmo's aunt Griselda was, very distinctly, one of the "dangerous classes." Resembling her brother in person, she had his tall stature and unflinching eyes,—which latter don't, as a rule, improve the female face; and when, as in this case, associated with a cruel mouth, they are not the kind of eyes with which one cares to exchange many glances.

Miss Glencairn "went in for" religion, bitterly; she employed it as the buttress of her misanthropy, and used Holy Writ, as an Irishman uses his shillelah, for purposes of assault and battery. The main article of her creed was that she was "elect," and (as is rather the way with the creeds of the "elect") the spiritual eligibility of her neighbours did not bulk very largely in it. She also held that "whatever is pleasant is wrong," and certainly acted up to this article, in so far that she denied herself the practice of all those sweet and gracious charities which are Christianity's pleasantest outcome. Cosmo had always regarded her with an aversion, tempered, in childhood, by the feeling that it must be wrong to dislike one who was so much mixed up, as she appeared to be, with the

Bible. Eventually he arrived at a sort of compromise, and she became to him something like the damnatory clauses of the Athanasian Creed, —sacred, perhaps, and certainly awful, but lovable by no manner of means.

She had hated Cosmo's mother with more than the normal *acharnement* of sisters-in-law, and she cordially detested him. The animosities of such women reach beyond the grave, and transcend the limits of generations.

The party was completed by Mr Hopper, an individual whom Mr Glencairn had promoted, in years gone by, from managing clerk in his house to be junior partner, and who now, thanks to the same influence, occupied the post of Managing Director in "Glencairn & Co., Limited," with a large salary and a position of influence at the Board, due to his knowledge of the iron trade —and to other personal attributes.

In person he was

"A little, glassy-headed, hairless man,"

of an uniform drab colour, and with a neutrality of expression which would have baffled a physiognomist. Interpreted by his preposterous baldness, however (for baldness *does*, somehow, suggest respectability), this blank was placed to his credit, and taken as satisfactory evidence

of simple-minded probity. He had obviously not forgotten his earliest relations with his patron, in whose honour he exaggerated an habitual eagerness to assent, which sometimes led him to complete for his interlocutor a sentence, or word, which stood between him and the fruition of acquiescence. Victor Hugo would have called him "an incarnate YES." Another propensity, connected with an earlier and humbler stage of life, was still to be observed in him, and that was a certain waywardness with regard to the letter *h;* but, to do him justice, this was only manifest under circumstances of strong excitement.

All this baldness and acquiescence, combined with a talent for making things pleasant and for *concealing* considerable powers of initiative (while using them dexterously), made Mr Hopper exactly the sort of man to appear the mere instrument of his Board, and to be its mainspring.

Miss Glencairn received her nephew with marked frigidity. Her manner expressed the watchful reserve of a policeman resolved "to use against" his prisoner any statement which he may inadvertently make on his way to the station-house. Mr Hopper, on the contrary,

welcomed his patron's son with characteristic effusiveness. "Ply me with hard sayings!" his manner seemed to say; "give me largely of the bread of paradox, that I may butter it (and you), and devour it greedily!"

Dinner being presently announced, the ill-assorted quartette repaired to the dining-room and sat down to the meal, after it had been aggressively blessed by Miss Glencairn.

Mr Glencairn was taciturn constitutionally —his sister was so, partly from habit, partly because she disliked her present company; and as for Cosmo, he had so little in common with the others, and received such scant encouragement to talk from his aunt and father, that he too was very silent. Thus Mr Hopper, whose conversational talent lay chiefly in assent, was rather in difficulties; it being manifestly hard to "say ditto" to people who advance no propositions whatever.

It was, however, his *métier* to "make things pleasant;" and a silent meal being clearly unpleasant, he made, under much discouragement, loyal efforts to keep the ball of conversation rolling. Mr Glencairn occasionally snubbed Mr Hopper, but (just as he accepted his *outré* acquiescence) rather, as it seemed, from a mechan-

ical habit, than from any special interest he took in Mr Hopper's views. Miss Glencairn also snubbed him, as she snubbed every one when she could, simply out of "contrariness" and as dogs delight to bark and bite. Under all these trying circumstances, Cosmo was rather a godsend to him, for he was a novelty; and bethinking himself of the young man's travels as a good conversational "claim" to work, Mr Hopper commenced operations on it, with the energy of a gold-seeker.

"It's not wonderful," he cried, "at your age, and with your talents, tastes, *and* fortune, that you should like to travel. I can conceive its joys. I can see its advantages."

"A rolling stone, Mr Hopper," said Miss Glencairn, in a deep, knelling, too-late-too-late-ye-cannot-enter-now tone of voice—"a rolling stone gathers *no* moss,—none."

"True, ma'am, most true; but—let us consider a little—though that may be a disadvantage to some, nay, to most stones, yet perhaps, where you have a polished marble, the necessity for moss may, in a sense, be dispensed with—in a sense, of course. Ah, ma'am! when a man travels, he don't (so to speak) rust. There's the great point. When the wheel revolves, it *can't*

rust. All 'stay-at-homes,' like myself, are conscious of rusting. Sadly. All of us."

"Hopper!" said Mr Glencairn.

"Sir?"

"*I* stay at home mostly, and I'm not conscious that I'm——"

"Rusty!" exclaimed Mr Hopper. "Of course not, sir; I said 'like myself,' not *you*, sir. Too fine a metal, if I may so express myself. Gold don't rust, eh? ha, ha!—and then the mental activity! But with *me* it's different — quite. Look at me!"

"I should have thought," said Cosmo, "that the excitement of business would keep off the rust."

"You're perfectly correct, Captain Cosmo; in a sense, that is: but there are two or three different ways of rusting."

"If you lay up for yourself treasures upon earth," knelled Miss Glencairn, "as I fear you do — as I *know* you do—*that* is one way in which you will assuredly acquire rust. What does the Bible say?"

"I know, ma'am, I know—only too well. I honour the Bible, ma'am—I try to square my life with its maxims; but, in the present depressed state of the iron trade, there's no rust of

that sort coming my way. With 'pigs' at 49 —I beg your pardon, ma'am, with pig-iron at forty-nine shillings the ton—the poor sinner has nothing to hope, I should say to apprehend, in *that* direction. He ought to be thankful, perhaps, for his freedom from temptation—as thankful as the old Adam will permit, and——"

"Hopper!"

"Sir?"

"Is it, or is it not, a business maxim that the man who mixes up religion with business, is a man to be distrusted?"

"It is, sir, most unquestionably," replied Hopper, in a voice of deep dejection, which might either imply regret for the existence of so deplorable a maxim, or penitence for his own lapse into religion.

"I wish you would lay it to heart, then."

"Oh!" cried Miss Glencairn, rearing a war-like crest—"oh! this is indeed monstrous! The merest heathenism! Brother!"

"Well?"

"What does the Bible say?"

"The Bible, Griselda, says that there is a time for all things, and *I* say that the time for religion is neither during business hours nor at the dinner-table."

"I should like to know, then, how you interpret 'in season and out of season'?"

"I don't interpret it at all, and, what's more, I won't *have* it interpreted either at my dinner-table or in my business room. Change the subject, Hopper, if you please."

The 'religious difficulty' was one of frequent occurrence between Mr and Miss Glencairn; but when the former adopted this trenchant method of adjusting it, his sister knew that she might as well strike her colours at once; which she now accordingly did, and relapsed into an angry silence, only broken by some muttered allusions to Mammon, Apostacy, and the Thessalonians.

Charged to change the subject, Mr Hopper flew back with alacrity to Cosmo's travels.

"Now, Italy, Captain Cosmo," he said, "*that* must be a fine country—in its way, of course. Vesuvius, and—by the by, sir, did you ever see Garibaldi?"

"Yes, I have had that pleasure. Indeed I made a pilgrimage to Caprera, and visited him in his own home."

"Prodigious! to think of that! Now, sir, is he very fierce, should *you* say?"

"No; I should say decidedly not. A little

child might play with him; in fact, a little child *was* playing with him when I arrived. He was very rheumatic at the time, however, which might account for it."

"Clearly so. Quite. Well, what did he say about the state of things?"

"That's rather a wide question," laughed Cosmo.

"So it is, sir; unreasonably vague. Well, I suppose he would like to drink the old pagan's blood? You'd make *that* out, I fancy?"

"I don't know to whom you allude."

"The Pope, Captain—the Pope, sir!"

"The Pope is a very good old man, Mr Hopper. I think it is altogether wrong to speak of him as a pagan."

"Distinctly so, sir. It was a jest; a poor one, I admit. Did Garibaldi speak of his Holiness?"

"No; in fact we did not talk politics at all."

"I see, I see: better so, better so."

This complaisance to the Pope was, however, too much for Miss Glencairn, who, unmindful of her brother's edict, dashed into the conversation, brandishing her tomahawk.

"For shame, Mr Hopper! For shame, Cosmo! 'Holiness!' 'Good old man!' forsooth!

This *is* putting bitter for sweet. Pagan? ay, he is a double-dyed pagan! Shame to the Protestant who denies it! Worse than all the pagans that have gone before. The dragon! The deceiver! The adversary! Holiness! Is sin holy? Is blasphemy holy? Who, I should like to be told, is 'the scarlet-coloured beast'? Who is the beast 'having seven heads and ten horns'?—answer me that. Who is he?"

"I suppose," said Cosmo, suppressing a strong inclination to laugh—"I suppose you wish me to say he is the Pope; but I can't identify *him* with these astonishing hyperboles — indeed I can't."

"This comes of foreign travel! This is cosmopolitanism, I suppose. We turn our backs on the blessed light; we go into the dark places of the earth: no wonder we can't discern the truth. But you, Mr Hopper,—you, who have *not* been lapping up error at the waters of Marah; you, who have *not* been rolling idolatry 'like a sweet morsel under your tongue,'—I ask *you,* who is this 'having seven heads and ten horns'?"

Mr Hopper, though he had spoken so handsomely of the Bible, and, indeed, sometimes affected a Scriptural twang when Mr Glencairn

was not by, perhaps knew the spirit of Holy Writ better than he knew its letter; the apocalyptic lore was, at all events, beyond his range, and he was sorely mystified by all these heads and horns. He glanced at his patron, hoping for his support, but saw nothing in that quarter save a look of grim amusement, inconsistent (Mr Hopper thought) with his recent words. He looked at Cosmo; but *he* wore the expression of a man who has fired his shot and does not mean to waste another cartridge. The Avenger reiterated her question. Whereupon poor Hopper tried to trim, and began to drop his *h*'s, stammering that "as for these 'eads and 'orns, much was to be said for them; but, at the same time, perhaps a good deal in an opposite sense," and then broke down and truckled—mumbling that he was an erring mortal, and could not presume to oppose his opinion to that of one so notoriously Scriptural as Miss Glencairn. Whereupon that lady, unmollified by the compliment, asked if she was therefore to understand that he *did* reserve an opinion favourable to the Pope—in short, clamoured for a distinct declaration as to the real proprietorship of the "seven heads and ten horns." Whereupon Mr Glencairn and Cosmo both laughed outright;

and Mr Hopper, lured to his destruction by the supposed encouragement, rashly attempted to escape from the dilemma by turning the whole thing into a joke, and remarked that, "in any case, seven heads were too many for *any* one man to keep clear and straight, and that if the Pope were to be docked of a few of them—say four—it would probably be for the advantage of Christendom; while, as for the ten 'orns——" but Mr Hopper was not allowed to finish his impious sally.

"Was he aware that the language he was playing with was from Holy Writ?" Mr Hopper was not sure, but thought (as a shot) that it *might* be from the Apocrypha. And then the vials of Miss Glencairn's wrath were frankly opened upon him; and he learned, among other striking facts, that there existed a strong parallelism between himself and many of the most abandoned characters of Old Testament history —all with very hard names, except Og, the king of Bashan, who, in other respects also, was perhaps the least open to reprehension.

For a short time Miss Glencairn was permitted thus to buffet Mr Hopper; but she soon infringed Mr Glencairn's private act against iteration, and then he interposed, walking quietly

into the *mêlée*, and rescuing, so to speak, the dishevelled manager from the clutches of his antagonist.

"That is enough, Griselda," he said. "Mr Hopper, take a glass of that Marcobrunner. I hope you'll find it better than the water of Marah."

And when Mr Hopper made a glozing and weak-kneed attempt to right himself with Miss Glencairn, by inquiring if she were *absolutely positive* that the seven heads and ten horns were *not* "out of the 'Pilgrim's Progress,' which he fancied—he thought—he knew"—Mr Glencairn closed him also, again inviting him to change the subject. So there was nothing for it but silence and wrath on Griselda's part, and Marcobrunner and discomfiture on the part of Mr Hopper.

From this state of limpness, however, he gradually emerged, by putting some questions to Cosmo as to the Italian rate of exchange; and having elicited his views as to the depreciation of the paper currency in that country, gradually worked his way back to smooth plumage and general acquiescence and admiration.

"You hear what he says, Mr Glencairn?" he cried. "A summary, sir! Terse. Concise."

"I hear it," said Mr Glencairn; "but, with due deference to Cosmo, I must take some ex——"

"Ceptions!" shouted Hopper. "Unquestionably. In such matters that is inevitable. But Captain Cosmo's brain has been at work—at work, and to good purpose. I can see that."

"Come, come, Mr Hopper," said Cosmo, laughing, "you mustn't try to humbug me." And then Mr Hopper, by a gesture more eloquent than words, disclaimed any such mad and perilous enterprise; and so the strangely-constituted symposium went on, Miss Griselda and Mr Hopper being occasionally called to order by the chairman, and the tenor of the conversation sent topsy-turvy by that autocrat and his peremptory calls for a change of subject. As this requisition was invariably made upon the managing director, whose range of general ideas was very limited, he would have been sorely put to it but for the reserve of Cosmo's travels, which meandered, like a fertilising rivulet, through the barren wastes of the conversation.

Towards the end of the sitting, this brought him to Athens, with regard to which Mr Hopper had three ideas: the first, connected with a certain M. Christopoulos, an iron-broker of much

flagitiousness, who, it appeared, had on one occasion got to windward of Mr Hopper; the second, with an unsatisfactory contract for rails for the Piræan railway; and the third, with the Apostle Paul. Thus was the city of Pericles associated in the mind of Mr Hopper. And *apropos* of the last head, the unfortunate manager, still burning to rehabilitate himself with Miss Glencairn, thus expanded—

"A fine thing it must be, Captain Cosmo, to stand, as you have stood, on the top of the Areopagus—which I take to be an edifice on the summit of Mars Hill—a grand thing to stand there and say, 'This is the *very* spot where the great apostle stood and preached to the men of Athens!' It was an act of courage, sir, that. It was a kind of a taking of the heathen by the beard—a kind of a bearding of the lion in his den, if I may so say—that I've always admired him for. I wish some one else would give the scoundrels a bit of his mind nowadays. They must require it, if Christopoulos is a fair specimen. I wish some one would take Christopoulos by the beard. I wish *I* had the chance." Here Mr Hopper pantomimed the action of struggling with a beard for some seconds, and added, "I'd *Christopoulos*

him! There's a fellow that would have been capable of forging St Paul's name to an acceptance! I assure you, ma'am, he would. He forged mine."

"Don't address me, Mr Hopper, if *you* please," snorted Miss Glencairn; "don't associate *me* with a conversation where sacred names are treated with irreverence."

"Irreverence, my dear ma'am!—irreverence! Who could suspect me of it?"

"I don't suspect you—I *accuse* you; you are self-convicted. What had St Paul to do with trade and money-making, I should like to know? Acceptances, forsooth! pollution!"

"Ah, ma'am, you do me injustice! I honour your sensitiveness, though. It's noble. But are we not told that Paul was a tent-maker? and if a tent-maker, then a seller of tents, and so both a manufacturer and a merchant, as well as an apostle. I've always been proud to feel that I belong, in a sense, to Paul's calling. Always."

"He wasn't a trader; he gave everything to the poor brethren."

"There's a great deal in what you say, ma'am—a very great deal. Still, ma'am, the question *will* rise, 'How did he *get* what he gave?'"

But, at this juncture, the cup of Miss Gris-

elda's wrath ran over, as not unfrequently occurs with ladies on the slightest adverse application of logic, and she swept from the room with awful dignity.

"You've put your foot in it, Mr Hopper," said his patron, with a grim smile.

"To my regret, sir—to my deep regret. Bull, so to speak, in a china-shop. The intention was, however, good. I thought it might gratify Miss Glencairn to know the high respect I entertain for one of her——for the apostle; which is genuine, sir, and unfeigned. The business qualities of his mind have always struck me. I've often thought that, as chairman of a com——"

"Hopper!"

"Sir?"

"Let us change the subject, if you please."

CHAPTER XV.

In the drawing-room after dinner, Miss Griselda devoted herself to a bilious-looking magazine; Mr Glencairn read the newspapers; and Mr Hopper fluttered about the room, perking little observations half to himself, half to Cosmo, who looked at a book of prints, while his mind was occupied with very different subjects. For it had occurred to him that, of the two matters which had brought him to Edlisfort, the least important might possibly be advantageously opened to Mr Hopper, who, though ridiculous in social converse, was notoriously a capable man of business. Mr Hopper would undoubtedly be glad to oblige him, by helping his friend with advice, or perhaps with something more substantial.

He had, of course, no more faith than his father had in that gentleman's hyperbolical respect and devotion; but it was Mr Hopper's interest to be well with him, and that was

sufficient; and it *might* very possibly be in his power to "put something in Phil's way," through some of the various business channels with which he was connected. Then Mr Hopper would have no prejudices touching Phil to affect his hearty co-operation, and it was otherwise with Mr Glencairn. Before the evening terminated, therefore, he had decided that Mr Hopper should be consulted.

The dinner had been early, and the night was still young, when Miss Glencairn bade them good-night and removed the pall of her presence. Cosmo, feverishly anxious to get something done before he slept, was debating with himself whether he should now invite his father to give him a private interview, and straightway open the paramount matter to him, or whether he should seduce Mr Hopper to the smoking-room and unfold his wishes as to Phil, when Mr Glencairn solved the problem by unexpectedly lighting a candle and declaring with a lusty yawn that he was "played out." "You'll find everything right in the smoking-room, Cosmo," he said, "and I make no stranger either of you or Mr Hopper, so good-night." Perforce, therefore, he fell back upon the second string to his bow, and invited the manager to accompany him

to the den sacred to tobacco and the slaughter of the small hours.

Mr Hopper was no smoker, but "he could not resist the rare (in every sense) pleasure," &c. &c., and went grateful.

When they were comfortably established in the sanctum, Cosmo at once drew the conversation into business channels, and notable was the transformation which took place in his companion's manner and style of speech when he found himself once again in his congenial element. Though upon alien topics jerky, grotesque, and inconsequent, as the spasms of a fish out of water, Mr Hopper's speech, on his natural subjects, flowed smooth, copious, and coherent.

"Company flourishing, I hope, Mr Hopper?" Cosmo began.

"Thank you, sir, yes. *It* will do. No mistake there. Trade is what they call 'bad,' to be sure. There has been over-production, and there has been a glut, and there has been stagnation, and reduction of wages, and strikes, and alienation of trade. Never mind, sir. A. Glencairn & Co., Limited, weathers them all. We watch; we foresee; we adapt. We're elastic, that's what we are. All a matter, sir, of alternative combinations, sound connections, and, if I may

so say, sleepless management. Mr Glencairn's guarantee is safe, sir—*as* a church. He guaranteed 'nine' for a term of years, you know. We'll not get below the 'nine' at the worst; and when the rebound comes—*then*—aha!" Mr Hopper made a large but incomplete circle of his arms, to figure the limitless wealth that might be looked for at the period of the "rebound." He then went on to express his wonder, as he had often done before, that a man of Cosmo's acumen had never taken any of "our shares," and still greater wonder that he should be contented with mortgages at $4\frac{1}{2}$ and Government stock at $3\frac{3}{4}$. With the greatest deference, Mr Hopper must say that such returns were "paltry." He was sorry to use so strong a word; but when he considered the capabilities of capital, it *did* seem to him that a man who could sit down content with *such* returns from such a tremendous source of reproduction, *was* a man who—who was satisfied with—that which—is "paltry." There was really no other word for it.

"Well, Mr Hopper," said Cosmo, "the capital, at all events, is safe; and the return, if it be *paltry*, is at least regular, besides being more than twice over sufficient for my requirements."

"Safe, captain! Sufficient! Why, sir, you

might double your fine income, and yet be as safe as the bank, in many undertakings, and unquestionably in ours. And 'sufficient!' Oh, sir, is that a view to take of capital? Think of its power; remember the responsibilities attached to it. Four per cent! O Lor! It's like cutting off one of your legs and one of your arms, and putting out one of your eyes. It's like encouraging your child to play truant from school. It's like using a helephant to do the work of a costermonger's pony. It's a kind of an outrage to Enterprise. It's a slap on the mouth for the spirit of the Hage. Forgive me, captain—forgive my 'eat. O Lor! O Lor!"

It was Mr Hopper's way to be earnest and eager; and this sort of whole-souled gush was known to tell immensely upon amateur directors and meetings of shareholders flushed to a rose-colour by recent announcements of rattling dividends.

Cosmo, who had experienced it all before, laughingly gave it the go-by, by deploring his deadness to the commercial instinct, and his inability to use even half the "paltry" return which the "helephant" supplied to him.

This gave Mr Hopper a new point of departure.

"Then there are your 'clippings,' captain—your surpluses. Give them the chance of doing something. Don't *hoard* them. Because the dam browses in idleness, why leave the foal to eat its head off? I'll tell you what it is, sir—in confidence—we see our way to profitable development. We use new capital, not to dilute the profits of the old—mark that!—but to fortify the old and increase its productive power. Ahem! To a trifling extent, we are inclined to increase our capital. I have recommended a small issue of shares—say £80,000, more or less. Now, sir, to any extent, within that limit, I *think* I can guarantee you a holding with us. The Board, of course, have a right to the refusal of all new shares; but I'm confident that there's not one of us who won't say, 'I'll take my *pro ratâ* allotment, but I'll transfer it at once to the son of him to whom we all owe so much.' Say the word, Captain Cosmo, and I'll place your surpluses for you. To what figure now might the surpluses——"

"I'm sincerely obliged to you, Mr Hopper; but, really, I haven't thought of changing my system. As to the 'surpluses,' I daresay there's a certain amount of money in some kind of temporary investments; but how much, I don't

know. Every midsummer I have a clearing up with my agent, and everything is settled then, about investments, &c. &c. It is hard work at the time; but, after this yearly audit, I don't give my mind to money matters at all. In fact, they don't interest me."

Mr Hopper looked at him with a kind of wondering pity, as who should say, "Yet, I suppose this poor devil *may* possibly have a soul!" and then said, "Well, Captain, I won't despair of you yet. At your next audit, promise me that you'll give earnest consideration to what I've said. Do, now."

"I certainly will, Mr Hopper."

"My motives in speaking thus," said the manager, "with this freedom, are simply these—regard for your interests, and veneration for that sublime lever which has 'oisted Great Britain up to the pinnacle of commercial pre-eminence." With which peroration (from his last half-yearly meeting speech) Mr Hopper sank back, violently rubbing the equatorial line of scanty hair which girdled his gleaming head, looking every inch the director who courts inquiry and deprecates applause.

The way being thus paved, and Mr Hopper having had *his* innings, Cosmo said, "There *is* a

matter, Mr Hopper, on which I wish to consult you, as a man of business, and as a friend."

Mr Hopper was proud and delighted, and sat up, all attention.

"A friend of mine," said Cosmo, "is in difficulties."

"Monetary difficulties, sir?"

"Monetary difficulties."

Mr Hopper's face changed a little, his sympathies rather lying with the "surplused" classes.

"He is almost in want," continued Cosmo.

"Tut! tut! tut! sad, that—ve-ry sad."

"Yes, it is very distressing to me, who am his oldest friend, and the more so that I am at a loss how to help him. As to helping him with money, that is out of the question."

With this Mr Hopper promptly coincided; it required no demonstration, he said—none.

"Not," pursued Cosmo, "from unwillingness on my part, but from honest pride on his."

"Oh, indeed!" said Mr Hopper; the case was evidently going to be a puzzler.

"He is of high education; took an excellent degree at Cambridge; is very intelligent; and yet he has found it impossible to obtain any employment."

"His antecedents, perhaps, not quite—eh?"

"What, Mr Hopper?"

"Respectable, though not exactly criminal, of course."

"He is *my* friend, sir, and in all respects a gentleman."

"To be sure—to be sure! What *am* I thinking of?"

"He has been unfortunate, and, I must admit, foolish—that is all. You are acquainted with his name, for he is the son of my father's old friend, Mr Denwick."

"Whew!" Mr Hopper whistled, apologised, coughed, finally laughed nervously.

"That expresses your opinion of him, does it?" said Cosmo, grimly.

"Far be it from me, sir, to have a bad opinion of any friend of yours. I was merely recalling a little anecdote of your father's about him,—a merry story, a merry story—nothing more."

"It has not been a merry story for him."

"He went into some South American securities, if I recollect right, against your father's advice, and lost a good deal of money in a rather comical way."

"He went into Spanish bonds, and lost his all in a very *tragical* way."

"Tut! tut! tut! Dear, dear! that's bad — ve-ry bad."

"Yes it is. Now, do you think you can find him any employment?"

Mr Hopper rubbed his equator—but in the sense of a man who is invited to perform a miracle—pursed his mouth, and slowly shook his head.

"You see," he said at last, "there's nothing we could make of him. University gentlemen are, in some ways above, in others below, business. They're not available—that's the word. We couldn't make a clerk of Mr Denwick. It wouldn't pay us, and it wouldn't pay him. Besides, we take no *apprentices* or probationers. They must come to us finished. It takes time to *finish* a clerk to the mark of Glencairn & Co., Limited."

"Well, that is very true; but could you not put him into some berth where his general education would tell? We have lawyers and merchants at the head of our War Office and Admiralty sometimes. Their subordinates supply them with practical details, and their own talents and general knowledge enable them to organise and administer. You *have* various departments, of course?"

"Oh yes, we have—not a few; coal, ironstone, survey, finance, &c. &c."

"Well?"

"Well, my dear Mr Cosmo, surely you don't propose to put a novice at the head of one of the departments of A. Glencairn & Co., Limited?"

"Why not?"

"Oh sir! oh sir! Think! think! Besides, all our heads of departments have holdings in the Company—some of them large. It's one of our rules; they're, as it were, working partners. That wouldn't suit Mr Denwick. No."

"Outside the Company, then; through any of your business connections, do you not think you could find *some* employment (he's not proud) for my poor friend—something that would give him work for his brains and food for his body?"

Again Mr H. shook his head.

"Can you suggest nothing, even?"

Mr H. could not; but "give him a few minutes, and he would 'roll it over' in his mind."

During the few minutes accorded, the manager went through awful contortions of the face; rose up; moved about the room; stared at isolated flies on the wall; took out a pencil;

bit it; calculated; jotted; tousled his equator; finally sat down, smote his leg, and earnestly gazing at Cosmo, whispered, "I've got it—got it, sir—got IT."

"You have?"

"I have, sir—*with* your co-operation, but on that condition alone."

"You may count on that."

"Ah! I don't know; but a kind of a Providence seems to have connected my talk about your surpluses and your talk about Mr Denwick. That emboldens me; but in any case it is your affair. Now, sir, the thing lies in a nutshell. Invest £25,000 in our shares, for Mr Denwick, and he shall have a department by-and-by. In the meantime, as *your* friend, he shall come into my office and learn the details of business. There! the plan is simple."

"Simple, yes; but Mr Denwick would not accept a present of £25,000, even if I thought it right to give it to him."

"Present! O Lor! Captain, who talks of presents? Let me explain. You advance the money. The shares are bought in his name. The certificates are held by you, as security (*our* security, your father's security—good enough, hey?), and Mr Denwick pays you five per cent

interest, or what you stipulate for, on the capital; reserves a portion of the surplus for the extinction of the debt; lives on the rest; and qualifies, by the whole transaction, for a lucrative appointment, *should* his acquirements and capacity warrant his being selected, *by-and-by*. The plan pays you as well as your mortgages do; finds bread and work for your friend, and—what more would you have? At all events, captain, I can suggest nothing else."

"It's a noble idea!" cried Cosmo, with enthusiasm. "Nothing could be better. I help Phil, without putting him under an obligation which a gentleman could not accept; and help him in a way that will make him work, and keep him from sliding back into old ways and associations—of which, however, I think he has had enough. I can't sufficiently thank you, Mr Hopper, for your proposal. I close with it at once. But are you certain of your power to get the shares?"

"Leave it to me, sir. Find the money within six weeks, and the shares shall be at your disposal."

"Poor Phil! how pleased he will be! He will be as grateful to you, Mr Hopper, as I am. This is indeed luck!"

CHAPTER XVI.

In the morning, Cosmo's first care was to telegraph to Phil that on the next day he would receive a letter explaining all details of a remunerative "career" which was open to him—that the letter would also contain a cheque for £100, being an advance with which Phil was at once to clothe and house himself properly, and find some pasture-ground more eligible than that which he had been sharing with the black sheep of Leicester Square. And then he wrote the letter, which breathed all the affectionate delight which he felt at being able, "by the luckiest accident in the world," to help his friend; and worded it with such diplomatic delicacy, that you would have almost supposed that Cosmo was the real gainer, and that Phil's part in the transaction was that, by magnanimously undergoing a good deal of toil and risk, he was enabling his friend to obtain a higher rate of interest for his

money than heretofore. And these things being done, he went and ruminated for many an hour by the sea, thinking of his love and his hope and his fears, and how he would open the matter to his father, and when. And the day slipped away, and another precarious dinner was got through ; and before Mr Glencairn was "played out," Cosmo asked him, with some trepidation, for a private interview, which was at once granted, and they marched off to the "business room."

Fairly confronted with his father, Cosmo felt much difficulty in opening a conversation in which the initiative lay necessarily with himself. The result of the interview was of vital moment to his happiness (and Hope, once admitted, had grown hourly) ; and, beyond this, he shrank with an almost feminine sensitiveness, from exposing to observation those feelings which are jealously guarded even by natures comparatively coarse. It was with much embarrassment that he commenced the dialogue, scanned by his father's unfaltering eyes.

"We have never had any confidential intercourse, father," he said, "and I daresay my request for this interview surprises you."

Here Cosmo paused, and Mr Glencairn in-

timated that surprise was an emotion foreign to his nature.

"You are no doubt puzzled as to its object," continued the son.

"Guessing and puzzling would be the merest waste of time. You have a direct statement to make. Is it not so?"

"That is true."

"Then, pray, let us have it before us at once."

"I confess I have much difficulty in opening this matter to you. It is of a most delicate nature. It is difficult to plunge directly into a delicate subject."

"In business matters, between men of business, there need be no delicacy, where motives on either side are honest, and the lines of business adhered to."

"You forget that I am not a man of business."

"True; but still you are a gentleman, therefore incapable of proposing to a business man, on a business matter, anything you need be ashamed of—which is the plain English for 'having a delicacy.'"

"Ah! but this is not a matter of business, nor is it a proposal."

"My dear Cosmo, why speak in riddles? You say this is not a business matter, and I have

no knowledge of your world. I can't conceive you consulting me on any matter relating to *it*. I would help you with a guess to start your ideas, if I could, to be done with fencing. You are in trouble, evidently. All the world over, the troubles of young men are mainly connected with the purse or the heart. The former can't possibly affect you—as to the latter, ha! ha! you are not likely to seek me as a confidant; so, my ideas being exhausted, you must speak out —if you *really* want advice or an opinion," he added, looking at his watch.

Cosmo was silent for a minute, and then said, "Well, father, I am not exempt from the troubles of young men—as *you* define them."

"Ah! money after all! Speculation, of course; ruinous to amateurs. Foreign stock or shares, of course, and a question of holding or selling. Well?"

"No, father, my troubles have nothing to do with money."

"Then it is——"

"Yes," interrupted Cosmo, who shrank from hearing the divine word uttered by lips that seemed so earthly.

"Yes," he went on; "and now you will understand my hesitation."

"Well, then——"

"Listen, father, pray, and I will try to make you understand." Then nerving himself with an effort, he went on: "Lately, quite lately, it has been my lot to meet with a lady on whose perfections I will not dilate. It is enough to say that for me she *is* perfection, and that all my heart was given to her almost unconsciously, and before I had realised the profound impression she had made upon me."

Mr Glencairn rattled his watch-chain, and gave a little groan, discreetly commuted into a cough.

"She is beautiful," Cosmo went on, "and accomplished; and the only child, the heiress" —(Mr Glencairn dropped his watch-chain and sat up in his chair)—"of a nobleman of proud lineage and vast possessions——"

Here Mr Glencairn's natural reserve gave way, and he cried lustily, "Bravo, Cosmo!—bravo! Well done, sir!" and made as though he would take his son's hand. Cosmo interrupted him.

"Pray, hear all I have to say before you congratulate me."

"Excuse me; one question — is the landed property large?"

"I am sorry to say it is; but——"

"You prefer the funds? or concentration in minerals? Well, remember *they're* exhaustible; but perhaps there *may* be a mineral field into the bargain?"

"I'm afraid it is very probable; but really——"

"Afraid? Tut! tut! depression can't last for ever; and even now, if there should be 'hematite' in any quantity—should you suppose, now——"

"Allow me to say, my dear father, that, for a man of business, you strangely anticipate matters, which you will see when I assure you that not only are the lady's affections not secured, but that I dare scarcely hope that they ever could be bestowed on one so unworthy of her, even were every other obstacle removed. Her great prospects are really nothing to me; and even if they did not constitute an obstacle, which, to a certain extent, they do, I would rather have her dowerless."

Mr Glencairn grinned a knowing grin, but said nothing.

"When I found," Cosmo went on, "how deeply my feelings were compromised, there was but one step for me to take——"

"You declared yourself?—prematurely, perhaps?"

"No; I said nothing to the lady."

"I see; you went to her father?"

"On the contrary, I left the place at once."

Mr Glencairn was not a man swift to mirth, but this reply of Cosmo's plumbed the depths of his sense of the incongruous, and he burst into laughter loud and sincere. "I beg your pardon, Cosmo, but—'the one step for you to take!'—really—ha! ha!—upsets my gravity. I never understood you. I have thought it might be my fault; but now—O Lord!——" and he broke into laughter again—"but now, who but a wizard could understand a man who falls in love with a lady, and thinks that therefore 'the one step for him to take' is to fly from her at once!—frightened by the size of her fortune—is that it?—when he has a large one of his own, too—ha! ha! ha! Prodigious!"

"You misunderstand me, father."

"I hope so, my dear fellow; for the credit of your intelligence, indeed I do."

"Let me finish my statement, then. You will pardon me for saying that in my world—the distinction is your own—that in the society which I frequent, money is not *necessarily* a paramount consideration. It is important, of course, everywhere, but it can't do everything;

and though in matrimonial matters it can do much, it has its limits of power there too. This lady's great prospects, though, as I quite honestly say, they are far from an inducement to me, would *not* have deterred me from—from prosecuting my suit. The suit might have been hopeless; still this consideration of her fortune would not have deterred me, because my own fortune would have, so far, removed the suspicion of mercenary motives, as you justly suggest. I would not, therefore, have run away, but for another consideration, which is really the object of my interview with you."

"Ah," said Mr Glencairn, "I'm glad we're going to reach *some* point at last. I'm really getting a little confused."

"Admitting that money is the main thing looked at, in this miserable and selfish age, where matrimony is concerned, still, even nowadays there must be some kind of respectability in the antecedents of any suitor. I should say, for instance, that certain taints must not rest on his origin, otherwise he will be rejected by the most mercenary aristocrat. I should say that the hereditary taint of felony or illegitimacy would disqualify him. Father, how do I stand in this respect?"

"Great heavens, sir! what do you mean?" cried Mr Glencairn, starting from his chair; "what do you dare to insinuate?"

"Nothing—I insinuate nothing. The honour of our blood must be as dear to me as to you. I ask a simple question. I will put it differently. Father, who are we?"

Mr Glencairn laughed scornfully. "Who *are* we? I am Archibald Glencairn, formerly principal partner in the firm of Glencairn & Co., ironmasters, now a large shareholder in the Company of that name, and a financial operator known, ay, and respected, on most European bourses. As to yourself, you are better acquainted with the subject; but if you add your own experiences to mine, the question 'Who are we?' is satisfactorily answered, I take it."

"No, father, not at all. In the sense of your answer, I require, of course, no information. I am not trifling. You treat this as an impertinence. Is that just? I am your son, and of full age; surely I am entitled to the information I demand. When I was a child, my questions were always evaded. Once only did I get a sort of answer from my uncle Wildgrave—and what an answer! It was to the

effect that the less I inquired the better; that there was little to know, and that little, discreditable. In fact, I gathered that there was a flaw or a stain on my origin. I never repeated the question again; and your continued silence on the subject confirmed what my uncle hinted. Now it is everything to me to know—the truth; and I now ask you frankly, What is our pedigree?"

"Pedigree?" laughed Mr Glencairn, resuming his seat; "ha! ha! I'm afraid that has to be manufactured. Don't look so horrified; it is done every day. A mere question of money—and you are rich. I have heard that a high-priced article (including counterfeited title-deeds, and even tombstones) almost baffles an expert to detect its spuriousness. If people are fools enough to value such things, they deserve to be humbugged. It is more a practical joke than a fraud, for it simulates something which, intrinsically, is nothing. The foolers and the fooled are equally beneath contempt."

"That does not touch my question, which is still unanswered. Am I to understand that you are the first of our family?"

Mr Glencairn laughed and said, "I believe my father would have resented that idea emphatically."

"Oh, you *had* a father, then—forgive me—I mean, socially speaking?"

"I understand your meaning. Yes; my father was, socially speaking, a gentleman. At least I understand that a commissioned officer is technically so considered. He was a captain in the Indian army."

"And my grandmother? his *wife?*"

"My mother, his *wife*, was the daughter of an Indian judge."

Cosmo gave a sigh of relief and said, "Then —then—had he done—was there any cloud on his reputation?"

"No, I think not, 'socially speaking.' He was a foolish man, and a violent man, and a dissolute man. His death proved him to be all three, for he was shot in a duel to satisfy his antagonist's family honour, which had been outraged by him."

"But there was nothing else?"

"No; 'socially speaking,' he was clean-handed; brave, too, I believe, and even distinguished."

"Thank God!"

"Small mercies, Cosmo."

"Then, my uncle Wildgrave—what did he mean?"

"Ah! your uncle was superfine. All the Wildgraves were. We must go farther back for his horror of the Glencairns."

"Your grandfather was——?"

"My grandfather was an indigo-planter in India; but not much is known about him, except that he lived in India the greater part of his life, and died there."

"And *his* wife?"

"Well, Cosmo, as far as I can make out, there *had* been some little oversight on his part about *her*. In fact—though, let us hope, in other respects, a good husband—he never went through the form of marriage with her."

Cosmo started to his feet.

"Then," he cried, "my worst fears are realised!"

"Come," said his father, "that is a little unreasonable, surely. Be thankful for wedded parents and wedded grandparents. It is really a fair allowance, as matters go."

Cosmo sank into a gloomy silence, till he remembered that the pain was (or might be) his father's as well as his own, and then, to break the pause, he said—

"I understood from my uncle or from you, long ago, that we are of Scottish descent. Is this so?"

"Oh yes; the indigo-planter certainly went from Scotland. There is no doubt about that; neither any doubt that he changed his name. But now we are on the subject, and since you are entitled to know all I know, I may as well tell it you—little though it is—once for all, and you can form what conjectures you please. You are aware, I presume, that I have an elder brother?"

"Yes; but I know nothing more than that he exists, and is in India. By the by, I understood, also, that you and he were on bad terms. You have never mentioned him to me before."

"Right; and I mention your uncle Robert now, simply because it is mainly from him that I know anything about our family history. We quarrelled, or rather, he quarrelled with me years ago. The matter was simple enough. He grew tired of the civil service. He saw fortunes being made rapidly all round him in indigo. He thought he would like to make a fortune rapidly too—in indigo; but he lacked capital. I was prosperous; he knew it, and invited me to supply him with the necessary funds. I declined—mainly because to have disengaged so much capital from my business at that time would have thrown my own career back for

years. Besides this, Robert had no business qualities; almost inevitably he would have lost the capital; and, having resigned the service, would have had nothing to fall back upon. So I refused, for his sake as much as my own. He took a wrong-headed view of things; accused me of I don't know what all, and abjured my relationship in a theatrical way which showed how just was my belief that he would have failed in indigo. Well, well, he ought to thank me now, for he is high in the service; he don't however. His affair. In our friendly days we used often to talk together on this—this genealogical matter. He was sixteen years of age when our father died, and the statements he had from his lips amounted in effect to this: The indigo-planter—my grandfather—was of a good Scottish family; but having been very wild, as a lad, was in perpetual trouble with his people; and was at last turned out of doors by them, in consequence of an intrigue with a tenant's daughter, which scandalised the good people of the old world in a way which this more philosophical age would scarcely comprehend. He took the young woman with him to India, where, after having given birth to one child (my father), she died. His resentment

against his own family was very deep (as is often the case with those who have offended their families); probably he was theatrical, like your uncle Robert, for he had dropped their name from the moment he left home, and was never known in India by any other name than 'Glencairn.' He would conceal his real name, no doubt, by way of insult to those who had repudiated him. It is quite in keeping with Highland pride to abjure the abjurer, and scornfully spurn a connection which has already been renounced on the other side. So it is probable that his real name was never known; for he seems to have made no secret that the name we inherit from him was assumed—and the true name, had it been known, would likely have come down to us as this fact has come. No record of a marriage was left by him; nor is there any tradition that he owned to, or pretended to, a marriage. The evidence is all the other way. Old Mr Denwick—the father of my friend and benefactor—was the indigo-planter's intimate friend in India, and became my father's guardian; and being still alive at his death, was for a time the guardian of us children, which trust he bequeathed to his son—my friend, to whom I owe nearly everything. I think, there-

fore, that if there had been anything else to know, we should have learnt it through the Denwicks: unquestionably, if there had been any grounds for believing that my father (who was most anxious and sensitive on the subject) was born in wedlock, these grounds would have been stated. Mr Denwick, however, denied all knowledge of the existence of such grounds. Here, then, is a blank, which can only, I think, be interpreted in one way. My father, according to Robert, had a variety of theories, some of which he shared, which made for his own legitimacy. I apprehend they had no solid basis. What is conclusive to me is, that no man who was not both a maniac and a villain would have condemned his son to the penalties of illegitimacy, by wantonly suppressing evidence of his marriage, because it was contracted in a name which would have identified his son with the race which he had abjured. There, Cosmo, that is positively all I know. If some one could weave a clean pedigree out of it, and identify us with a decent family, I should be glad of it for your sake. For myself, I have got on so well *without* a pedigree, that I confess to some indifference on the subject."

When this cold and passionless summation

was concluded, there was silence for some time. At last Cosmo groaned out, rather as thinking aloud than as addressing his father, "This accursed taint! can it *ever* be removed?" And then his father spoke. "I see," he said, "you have inherited the Wildgraves' ideas. *They* put the same question to themselves, *apropos* of me, and answered it in the negative. Well, that unlucky old indigo-planter *has* a good deal to answer for. I heard enough about him in my young days, when, like you, I aspired to marry into a proud family. I don't owe him a dutiful thought, I can tell you. But how many generations is he to keep in the shade? When do you suppose illegitimacy ceases to disqualify? Three generations make a gentleman, it is said: if so, they abrogate the bar; and you are the third from it. Is it not notorious that nowadays the bar-sinister, provided it is gilt, is no bar to social success? Times have changed since my youth. The world is more sensible; and you have the advantage of a generation over me. You have other advantages—position, solid wealth, lineage undisputed on one side. Fall back upon your mother's pedigree. With that and £10,000 a-year and prospects—ay, and *prospects*—you are good enough for any

of them. Take my word for it. If *they* think not, do as I did—take your own way. With the lady on your side, you can afford to laugh at them. They'll come round in time, and soon enough. May I ask who the noble lord is?"

"I would rather not mention the name."

"As you please; but whoever he is, he'll come round if the lady is on your side."

"My dear father, the lady doesn't dream of me; but even were it as you suggest, still you misunderstand the case. In some ways I do recognise the justice of what you say. It does seem monstrous that a bar like this should hang, like a felon's fetter, on generation after generation. But this is an exceptional case. The lady is not only her father's heiress,—she is the last of her family—an ancient and historical house, which must merge in the race with which she intermarries. Do you think, then, it would be honourable, without the concurrence of her father—the last male depositary of the family honours, traditions, and *prestige*—to persuade his daughter to an alliance which would couple their noble name with this ignoble bar? Don't you think it would be something like stealing a possession more valuable in their eyes than all their wealth?"

"No, I don't; but I *do* think, if you'll excuse me for saying so, that you are talking common nonsense. If the lady is the sole heiress of the family *prestige* (a shadowy inheritance, by the by), she is as much entitled to have an opinion about its disposition as about the disposal of the family wealth. You would have no scruples as to the latter appanage, which is of real importance; why, then, about the former, which is a dream—an idea? Well, well, well. You *are* a gentleman; you *have* your three generations, and that obliterates the bar, to which, I am very sure, this ungenealogical age will never say 'nay.'"

"I am very sure, however, that the noble lord in question will."

"Then the noble lord in question is an ——, is no wiser than he should be."

"That may be; but he is the guardian of his family honour, and has a right to his own opinion. What that would be, I know too well. He is the proudest of the proud. Twenty generations would not erase this blot. The suitor who seeks *his* approbation had need be immaculate."

"Then take your own way; win the lady, and leave the rest to time."

Cosmo sank into silence and abstraction. His

father's arguments; his own delicate sense of honour; the old peer's pride and prejudices; his own sense of justice; the conflict between the fading dogmas of past generations and the fresh and liberal views of modern life; the eclipse of privilege; and the triumph of individual merit over inherited *prestige*, — these, with his own fond wishes, rushed through his mind, clashing here, coinciding there, tumultuous and chaotic. And slowly from this confusion the dim outline of a compromise evolved itself, which, marking with judicial severity that which made against Cosmo, as well as that which made for him, yielded this balance in his favour, that that which in him was lacking *might* be supplied by personal distinction, won by *personal* effort. That would obliterate flaws — of which justice claimed the obliteration—and by a nobler expedient than the brute force of wealth.

"Ah!" he murmured aloud; "now would be the time to concentrate vague ambitions and desultory efforts! Could I but make a name for myself—a great reputation . . . then, indeed . . . but what can I do? . . . Yes, achievement is the root of real aristocracy. He who achieves must be nobler than he who merely inherits the rewards of achievement."

"Right, sir! right! therefore achieve."

Cosmo started to find he had been thinking aloud, and that his father's eyes were fixed upon him with a half-friendly, half-mocking expression.

He rose, and said—

"Father, I thank you for your information and advice. The unknown evil is always more formidable than that which we see, and my fears were greater than the fact. The fact is, however, sufficiently grave; indeed, an obstacle all but insurmountable, though *possibly*, in one way—— Well, there is no good pursuing the subject. One explanation, however, I must make. In my anxiety to know the disability which birth lays me under, I may have seemed to you to imply that, that being removed, no other impediment would remain. If I conveyed that impression, let me now correct it. That I am unworthy of this lady, I am very certain; that she might think otherwise is but a dream."

"Well, Cosmo, as I said before, I don't understand you, and never shall, I suppose; but what, then, does the whole thing amount to?"

"It amounts to this, that I came away from —from a certain influence, to dissipate dreams, or, if you please, to deaden pain, by using my

faculties and acquirements, such as they are, in some active sphere. I still wish to find that sphere. Our conversation has, at least, made no difference in that desire."

"There is but one obvious sphere for a man in your position, of your culture and general views, and that is the sphere of politics. You have surely turned your thoughts in that direction?"

"Yes, I have; but there are obstacles——"

"Obstacles! obstacles! obstacles!" shouted Mr Glencairn. "Lions in every path! This passes patience! Is this all that comes of an interminable education?"

Cosmo felt somewhat abashed at the rude justice of these remarks, but replied—

"I did not say that in *this* case the obstacles were insuperable. But it has appeared to me that when a man goes into political life, he ought to be able to identify himself heartily with one of the great parties—otherwise his career will be a failure, and he himself useless. I have never, as yet, seen my way to unqualified enlistment with any party."

"Oh, if that is all, it is a small matter! Every one leans towards certain outlines of political belief, sentiment, prejudice, or what

you please to call it. With this party or that or the other, he will find that these outlines are followed in a general way. No thinking man can honestly pledge himself to conform to all the details of all the measures which a party may support. All he can hope is to be able to subscribe to the general sentiment which guides it — to recognise its key-note as his own. I should fancy that your views are moderate, and that this should not be difficult to you."

"No, certainly; but I have strong opinions on some important subjects which have been made shibboleths of party adhesion, though no general principle, as distinctive of either party, is involved in them. Well, you can see that, if I were honest in my declarations, I should run a very strong chance of falling between two stools, and failing to be returned. Suppose I go consistently with the Conservatives on all but one subject, but that that subject has *arbitrarily* been made a Conservative test; I should expect that the Conservatives would oppose me for my defection on that point, and the Liberals for my generally Conservative views, and *vice versâ*. Well, but suppose, nevertheless, I *did* get into the House. I should not go there without ambition; and do you think I could look for poli-

tical advancement from a party to which I ran counter on one or more test-questions?"

"Ah, well, when a man has been in the House for a little, and sees things from nearer points of view, it's wonderful how well he manages to harmonise his views, on the whole, with his party—unless, of course, he is a crack-brained crotcheteer, when he is not worth considering. By the by, if it is only a question of *getting into* the House, there, I think, I could help you. Indeed it would suit me *personally* to do so. There is a borough in which we—I—have much to say. It is not much of a *political* borough; indeed I don't think the good folk there care two straws about any public question. They have a local interest to promote—a healthy legitimate interest—and what they chiefly want is a member who will nurse this interest. To a moderate man on either side, who would give some time and trouble to this affair, I think I could almost guarantee the seat. I take it that you have a Conservative bias, but that on some points you are inclined for discreetly liberal progress?"

"Yes; I think that, on the whole, defines my position."

"Very well, I will now give you all the

details, and you can think it over. I may say that I believe the sitting member will apply for the Chiltern Hundreds at the end of this session."

Mr Glencairn then briefly laid the details before his son, and, at last, the longest conversation that had ever taken place between them, came to a close.

There is no doubt that the direct and unsentimental view which Mr Glencairn had taken of every subject discussed had produced its effect upon Cosmo, and carried him farther than he could have believed towards his father's position. He had half admitted that, under certain conditions of compromise, his hopes need not be altogether abandoned; and now his father's prompt energy was hurrying him towards a step which *might* lead to these conditions, and which certainly would force him into a sphere of activity, between which and others he had vacillated — doubtful of the maturity of his powers and preparation—doubtful where his special aptitude lay. Even for his own mere peace of mind, he felt that active employment was now indispensable. Open to him, apparently beyond a doubt, an honourable sphere now lay. Would it not be

well, then, to abandon hesitation? To cut himself free from this eternal weighing of alternatives, and combating of scruples? The step *might* lead to this or that eventually; in the meantime, it meant "work," which nothing else offered. Would it not be well, then, to close with what would supply this supreme necessity? And if it meant hope, too? *Did* it mean hope, too? Well, at least nothing made a fairer offer of it.

Before Cosmo slept that night, his resolve was taken; and next morning he communicated to his father that the borough of Puffboro' might consider itself suited with a nurse for its "healthy local interest."

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